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**A. PUBLICATION DATA**

| 1. ERIC NUMBER | 2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S). | 3. IDENTIFICATION NO. | DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW |
|---|---|---|---|
| ED002686 | N.A. | N.A. | |

4. AUTHOR(S): Metzler, William H. and Sargent, Frederic O.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Migratory Farmworkers in the Midcontinent Streams

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: N.A.

7. EDITOR(S): N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. U. S. Department of Agriculture,
ST. Washington, D.C.
CITY, STATE
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE: Agricultural Research Service, United States Dept. of Agriculture, Wash., D.C.

| 10. VOL. | 11. PAGES | 12. MO./YR. | 13. TOTAL PP. |
|---|---|---|---|
| N.A. | N.A. | 12/60 | 34 |

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TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

**B. INDEXING DATA**

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: Report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | summer schools | housing |
| migrant farmworkers | geographical areas | socioeconomic status | education |
| Spanish-Americans | migrant families | crew membership | employment |
| migration patterns | recruitment | characteristics | earnings |

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

The Spanish-Americans of southern Texas provide one of the largest reservoirs of seasonal farm labor whose rate of movement is affected by economic conditions of the United States and Mexico. Recruitment of workers has become highly organized. Since migratory workers have been so important to the United States economy and have derived so little benefit, the study attempted to ascertain whether standards could be improved and whether migration could be reduced or eliminated.

During January and February of 1957 the migratory labor force of six southern Texas cities was surveyed by Spanish-American university students or graduates to gain information about characteristics, migration patterns, methods of obtaining work, and earnings. The annual movement of migratory farm workers from southern Texas to seasonal work in more than 30 states is a part of the agricultural economy; fluctuations occur according to shifts in areas needing labor, reduction in the length of the work season, and reduction in need of laborers. Large companies and small operators who needed seasonal laborers initiated the movement. Formerly, migrants needed a crew leader to make job contacts, but they now tend to travel in family groups in their own cars and make their own work arrangements. Their unemployment rate, though always high, is twice as great when they are on the road as it is when they are at the home base.

To help alleviate problems, families should move to areas where work exists, plans should be developed to correlate movement with local needs, day-care centers and summer schools should be provided for children, and transportation, housing, and sanitation should be improved.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

**C. FUNDING DATA**

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION

20. DIVISION OR DEPT.

21. CONTRACT NO.

PROJECT NO.

22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT

23. DURATION OF PROJECT

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Education

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# MIGRATORY FARMWORKERS IN THE MIDCONTINENT STREAMS

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*Production Research Report No. 41*

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Agricultural Research Service
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
*in cooperation with*
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

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# MIGRATORY FARMWORKERS
# in the
# MIDCONTINENT STREAMS

*By: William H. Metzler*
*and*
*Frederic O. Sargent*

Production Research Report No. 41

Agricultural Research Service
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
*in cooperation with*
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

Washington, D.C. Issued December 1960

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. - Price 40 cents

ED002686

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# MIGRATORY FARMWORKERS
# in the
# MIDCONTINENT STREAMS

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The annual movement of migratory farmworkers from southern Texas to seasonal work areas in more than 30 States appears to be an established phase of our agricultural economy. Yet the position of these workers in this broad labor market is precarious. Changes in production areas and in harvesting methods and competition from other sources of labor tend to shift the areas of need, to reduce the length of the work season, and to curtail the need for these workers.

The companies and organizations that initiated and promoted this movement are still active, although on a reduced scale. Both sugar-beet companies and cotton producers look forward to the day when they need not depend on a large seasonal labor force. But the many smaller operators in the work areas will continue to depend each year on seasonal labor supplies, and they have neither the organization nor the funds for intensive recruiting of labor. The role of State employment services in this movement is certain to increase. The large producers are also beginning to look to them for assistance.

The workers who engage in this movement of migrants from southern Texas are usually referred to as Spanish-Americans. Almost three-fourths of them were born in the United States of Mexican ancestry. Approximately 40 percent of the heads of households migrated to Texas from Mexico.

Formerly, these migrants needed a crew leader or spokesman to make their job contacts; now 60 percent of them travel in family groups in their own cars and make their own work arrangements.

The migratory workers can be classified into three major groups of approximately equal size according to their range of movement. One group moves within the State only and engages chiefly in picking cotton. Another group migrates to the sugar-beet, vegetable, and fruit areas around the Great Lakes, in the Rocky Mountain area, or along the Pacific coast. The third group also works in these out-of-State areas but cuts its work there short in order to engage in the cotton harvest in Texas.

These workers showed considerable skill in the timing and direction of their movement, and haphazard travel was the exception. A third of them worked in only one area away from the home base, and a fourth worked in only two areas.

Yet practically all were underemployed. During 1956, they averaged only 131 days of work. Heads of households averaged 174 days.

The unemployment rate while these workers were at home base was twice as great as when they were on the road, despite the fact that at the home base half of them were out of the labor market.

Average earnings per worker during 1956 amounted to $779, but male heads of households averaged $1,145. Average earnings per family varied according to the size of the family work force; they averaged $2,208. Less than one-fourth of this was earned at the home base; hence, migration was economically advantageous to these workers.

The families of these workers are large, averaging 6.5 members, and they possess a high degree of solidarity. More than half of the migrants are children below legal working age. It is customary among these families for all children to help in whatever tasks need doing. This results in irregular schooling, as the work season in the Northern States begins a month or more before the school term closes in the spring and ends several months after the fall term has begun. Because of this, practically all the children are educationally retarded.

Apparently size of family is associated with the need to migrate. When the family becomes too large for the earnings of one worker to support all its members, the household head looks for work that will permit other members to contribute to the family income. Conversely, families stop migrating when enough members obtain local employment and it no longer pays to migrate. They are as likely to obtain permanent employment in one of the work areas as at the home base.

Certain trends are helping to alleviate the problems associated with this movement: (1) The permanent movement of migratory workers to the work area and reduction of labor surpluses at the home base during the winter; (2) development of annual worker plans so as to correlate movement of the workers with local labor needs in any particular season; (3) development of day-care centers, summer schools, and other facilities to take care of the children who accompany the workers; (4) improvement in methods of teaching English to Spanish-speaking children; (5) more regular school attendance and increased educational attainment; and (6) improvement in transportation, housing, and sanitation to bring the living and working conditions of these people more in line with the norms of American life.

Problems of child support, regulation of child labor, and maintenance of educational opportunity are important aspects of this migratory movement. Therefore, a comprehensive program to reduce the movement of large families and to improve the timing of those who migrate is desirable to resolve these problems.

As a dependable work force is vital to the agriculture of seasonal areas, long-range policies to build up and increase such a force are needed. Due attention to regularity of employment, competitive pay scales, acceptable transportation and housing standards, and the development of an expanded local labor supply should help to achieve this result.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the largest reservoirs of seasonal farm labor for American agriculture extends across the southern tip of Texas and beyond the international border into northern Mexico. American workers of Mexican origin regard this area as home; they live and work on either side of the border as economic opportunities permit. They leave each year to perform the hand labor on thousands of farms from Ohio and Michigan to the Pacific coast. As they are beginning also to move to the Atlantic seaboard, they may soon become an important source of labor for seasonal work from Florida to New York. During the 19th century, ranchers looked to the border area for vaqueros (herdsmen) and pastores (shepherds) to care for their livestock. As early as the 1890's, workers moved from the border area on foot to pick cotton in eastern Texas (*24*).[1] As cotton production expanded in Texas and sugar-beet and vegetable production developed in the Northern and Western States, the demand for these workers grew. As early as 1927, Spanish-American workers constituted from 75 to 90 percent of the sugar-beet labor in the north-central part of the country

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[1] Italic numbers in parentheses refer to Literature Cited, page 59.

(*35, p. 7862*). Today, farmers in 34 States use families or crews from southern Texas to harvest their crops or perform other seasonal farm jobs.

Movement of workers into the United States from Mexico was at its peak around 1900, when labor agents were active in finding a supply of workers adequate to meet the expanding requirements for cotton and other hand-labor crops (*30, 44*). Both seasonal and daily movements of workers across the Rio Grande became part of the established economic pattern of the area. Many workers now possess the equivalent of dual citizenship. They may live and work on either side of the international boundary. In 1956, more than 65,000 immigrants from Mexico entered the United States. Usually those who have been able to gain an economic foothold in this country shift their residences permanently.

The rate of movement to this side of the border is affected by economic conditions in the two countries. During the early part of this century, adverse economic conditions in Mexico expedited the movement of workers to the United States. During the 1930's, there was evidence of a reverse flow across the river (*37, p. 1829*). During World War II, the tide of movement shifted northward, and this shift has continued.

Agricultural development on the Mexican side of the lower Rio Grande area is also a factor in the situation (*17*).[2] Development there has been almost as rapid as that in southern Texas. Cotton is the major crop, and the harvest season begins early in June. Thousands of seasonal workers are needed, and many of them come from the interior of Mexico. When cotton picking is completed there, the workers follow the harvest as it moves north.

The expansion of the Spanish-American labor force on the Texas side can be seen through 1940 from census figures. In 1900, there were 71,000 Spanish-Americans in Texas; in 1910, 125,000; in 1920, 388,000; and in 1930, 683,000. By 1948, the Spanish-speaking population of Texas was estimated at around 1,200,000 (*23*). The proportion of these people who remained seasonal farmworkers decreased rapidly, especially during the years of full employment that accompanied World War II. Most of them are now resident workers on the farms and in the packing plants, shops, and homes of their home areas (*14*).

Originally, recruitment of seasonal workers in Texas was on a "first-come, first-served" basis. Recruiters from any part of the country were free to come into the State and take all the workers they could find. As a supplement to these activities, the business of moving workers across the border, legally or illegally, flourished also (*4*). Labor recruitment became subject to abuse, and disputes over labor were common. The earliest recruitment was for work in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Colorado. Employers in Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Indiana, and Illinois soon added to the competition for labor. Texas farmers were sometimes short of labor at a time when a surplus of seasonal workers had been moved to other States. Attempts at regulation were not successful until an effective system of public employment offices was developed and legislation was passed that restricted the number of agencies engaged in the movement of workers to other States.[3] Administration of immigration laws is always a problem.

The movement of workers within Texas is equally as important as that to other States. The cotton harvest starts in the Rio Grande area in July and is completed in the High Plains area in November or December. By starting at the southern end of the State, moving northward through the Coastal Plains and Black Prairie areas, and ending in the High Plains, a worker may have a long season of employment (*25*). In most years, the number of workers in this movement exceeds the number of interstate migrants, depending upon cotton yields and other crop conditions.

A third type of migration pattern has developed. A family or crew may work in sugar beets and other crops in Michigan, Wisconsin, or Colorado until late July or August, then move to the cotton area of Texas. This provides a longer work season, but it means that the family is on the road 8 or 9 months of the year.

---

[2] According to Vamonos pal Norte, a report issued for the Oregon State Bureau of Labor (*1*), the real home of many Spanish-American farmworkers is deep in the interior of Mexico. Adverse economic conditions at home force them to go to the border and into the United States for work.

[3] See Texas Private Employment Agency Law (*27*). This law was enacted in 1929 and amended in 1943 and 1949. For the reaction of other States to this law, see Migrant Farm Labor in Indiana (*21*).

Recruitment of workers from southern Texas has become highly organized as large-scale employers and grower associations have become active. In spring, recruitment staffs of sugar-beet companies, fruit and vegetable canners, grower associations, and large-scale farmers come into the area to locate workers and arrange for their transportation (*37, pp. 1807–1809*). Locally, private employment agencies and many crew leaders participate in the recruitment drive. They may be associated with the large recruiting agencies, or they may operate for themselves. Although the number of licensed agencies is small at present, they compete sharply for labor. The Texas Employment Commission now takes a larger part in the recruitment program than formerly; it supplies workers to employers both within and outside the State.

There is also an unorganized movement of workers from southern Texas, but its extent is not known. Many families and small crews have developed their own work connections; they have no contact with organized and licensed recruiting agencies. During the depression years, a surplus of labor was on the roads and an elaborate recruiting system was unnecessary. During World War II, an organized recruitment mechanism again developed (*26*) because of the tight labor supply, gasoline rationing, and other controls. Freewheeling declined, only to reappear when controls were removed.

The number of migratory workers who leave this area varies from year to year. The Texas Employment Commission estimated that in 1939 the number of migratory workers in Texas was 325,000 (*38*). This may have been a peak figure associated with depression, displacement, and unemployment. By 1947, the migratory movement probably was at a minimum. The number of workers who moved to the sugar-beet and the vegetable areas in the North Central and Mountain States was estimated to range from 40,000 to 60,000, and the number in the cotton movement within and outside Texas was estimated at 60,000 to 80,000 (*41*). In 1949, the Texas Employment Commission estimated that approximately 90,000 Spanish-Americans had migrated from the State—49,000 through the activities of licensed agents, 20,000 through the Texas Employment Commission, and 20,000 on their own initiative (*39*).

Although the Emigrant Agency Law passed in 1929 was effective in reducing the number of recruiters from outside the State, it did not prevent unnecessary and wasteful migration. Many workers still returned penniless after a long trip north and had to rely on public assistance for food and funds to see them through the winter. Poor timing of migration of workers to areas that did not need them, irregular work, and low rates of pay became matters of public concern. Officials of the Texas Employment Service have now set up a systematic information system in regard to the progress of the cotton harvest in all areas of the State. They also cooperate with the employment services of other Western States in the development of preseason programing of work commitments for crews that go outside the State. This program, which is known as the Annual Worker Plan, calls for a preseason schedule of jobs for each crew before it leaves home. Farm labor offices in the work areas are notified of any gaps in the work schedule so that they can keep the crew employed.

How much longer this well-established source of seasonal labor can be depended on is problematical. Many Spanish-American workers now qualify for industrial and other nonfarm employment; others have become regular farmworkers; a few have become farm operators. Movement of workers out of the State on a permanent basis is becoming more common. Until recently, their place in Texas was taken by illegal, or "wetback," labor that appeared from across the border at about the time it was needed. Legally imported workers from Mexico and other countries now do much of the seasonal hand labor in Texas and other States in which Spanish-American labor is employed. Employers say that these workers are coming in to fill a vacuum, but some workers say they are being driven out of the State by this competition, despite the safeguards set up to protect them from foreign competition.

Both the Texas Employment Commission and the Texas Bureau of Labor Statistics record annually the number of migratory workers in the State. These records indicate that in 1956 there were approximately 34,000 interstate and 40,000 intrastate migrants and approximately 43,000 interstate and 37,000 intrastate migrants in the two following seasons. These records are necessarily incomplete because an unknown number of workers and crew leaders strike out for themselves without contacting State officials. According to data from these agencies, approximately 90 percent of the migratory workers live in an area that extends south from San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and Eagle Pass.[4] Outside this area, the only city with any large number of migratory workers is Austin, although there are smaller settlements at Lubbock, Waco, Taylor, Bryan, and other cities.

## Purpose and Method of the 1957 Survey

For several decades, the economic status of migratory workers has left much to be desired. Although these workers have become an essential part of the agricultural economy of the United States, they have had a very small share in the national prosperity, the high levels of living, and other advantages associated with American life.

The well-being of these people, who are an essential part of our economic mechanism, is a matter of general concern. They are leaving seasonal farmwork as fast as other opportunities become available, yet harvest work is essential. Analyses are needed to ascertain (1) whether the need for migration can be eliminated or substantially reduced by intensive recruitment of local labor, or (2) whether standards can be developed that will give this kind of employment a higher economic and social status.

Basic to any program affecting migratory farm labor is the need for more definite knowledge concerning the types of workers in the migratory labor force, where they migrate, how much work they obtain, and how much they earn. The survey on which this report is based attempts to answer these questions about the migratory workers who were in southern Texas during the winter of 1956–57. It also provides data concerning the system of moving these workers through recruiting agents and crew leaders. As there is a significant movement out of the migratory labor force, information was obtained also from exmigrants as to why they had left work of this type. Such basic problems as housing, sanitation, health, and care of children and youth are equally important but were left for specialists in these fields.

The survey was made in six cities in southern Texas in which there are large settlements of migratory farmworkers. San Antonio, Crystal City, Eagle Pass, Laredo, Weslaco, and Robstown were selected to provide a cross section of the southern Texas home-base area (fig. 1). The fieldwork was done during January and the early part of February 1957, when the number of migrants in the area was near the maximum. The number of migrants in the sample cities was affected by the drought that had existed in parts of southern Texas since 1951. Consequently, migratory families who needed regular employment during the winter often had to go elsewhere to find it.

The interviewers for the survey were Spanish-American youth, many of whom were students or graduates of St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Tex. They did not come from the families of migratory farmworkers but were interested in them because of a common racial and cultural background. This interest was not regarded as strong enough to affect the results of the survey.

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[4] See Spanish Speaking Population of Texas (*23*) for location of the Spanish-American population in the State.

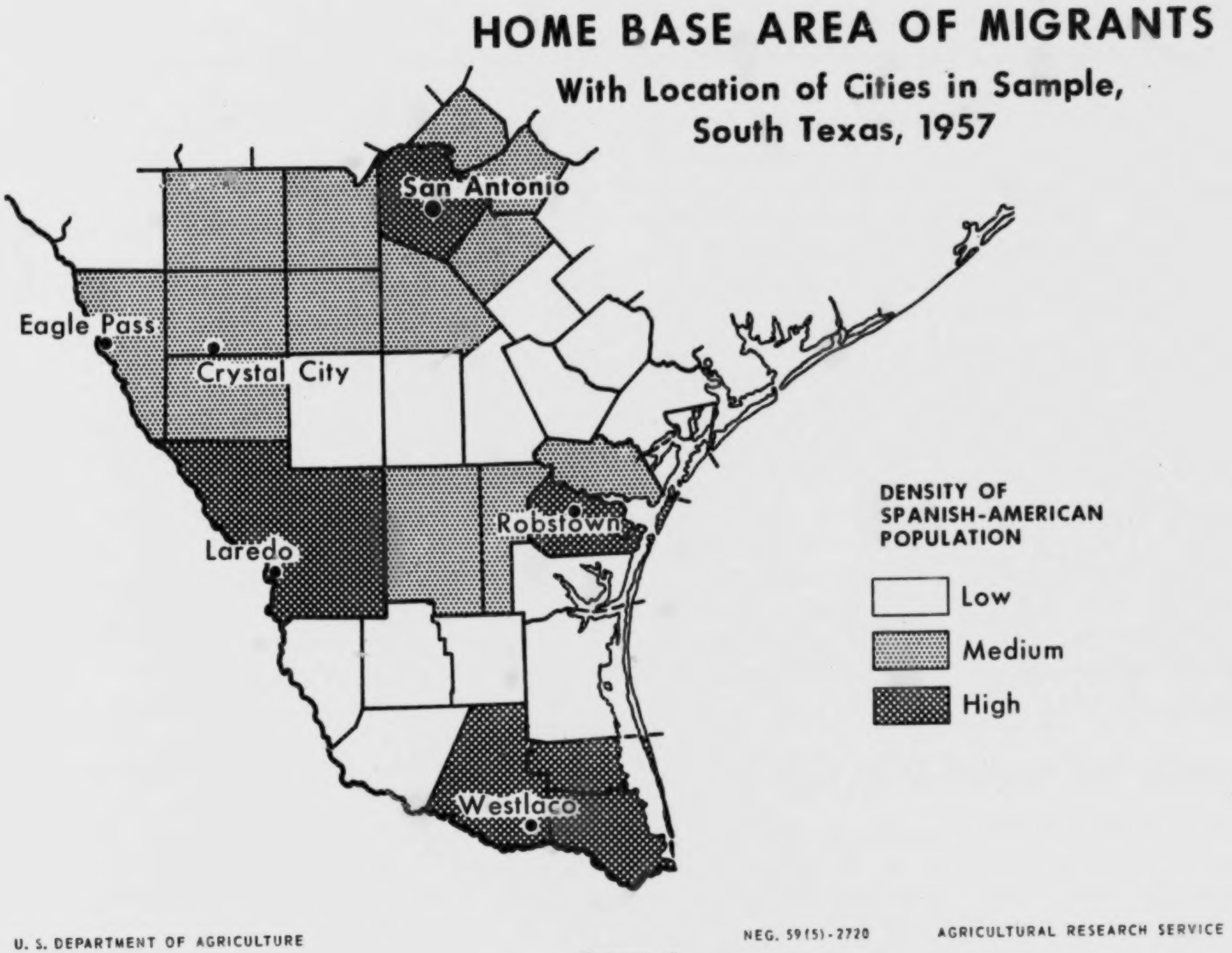
HOME BASE AREA OF MIGRANTS
With Location of Cities in Sample, South Texas, 1957
San Antonio
Eagle Pass
Crystal City
Robstown
Laredo
Westlaco
DENSITY OF SPANISH-AMERICAN POPULATION
Low
Medium
High
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NEG. 59(5)-2720
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

FIGURE 1

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SOUTHERN TEXAS MIGRANTS

### Household Size and Composition

Spanish-American households are often larger than the biological families. Traditionally, these people make provision for the welfare of relatives and friends, which may include the furnishing of food and housing for them for some period of time. The interviewers who did the fieldwork for this survey were frequently undecided as to which persons should be included as members of the household. The rule applied was that those who had been members of a household for a major part of the year were to be included. Temporary residents were not included.

The average household in the survey had 6.5 members (table 1). In San Antonio and Robstown, the average size was 6.8, while the smallest average number, 5.9, was in Eagle Pass. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the median-size family in this country in 1956 consisted of 3.29 persons (*34*). Low-income families averaged around 2.5 and high-income families around 3.9 persons. Migratory labor families in southern Texas, therefore, make up a distinct type of household. Data for comparison with nonmigrant households of Spanish extraction in the same area are not available but, according to 1950 census data, the average size household in Texas was close to that in the Nation as a whole, 3.4 persons (*33*). The impression develops that migratory labor families in this area are unusually large. Possibly, size of family has much to do with migration, which provides a way for several members to add to the family finances.

TABLE 1.—*Family makeup and pattern of migration, by home-base city, migratory households, southern Texas, January 1957*

| Item | All cities | Home-base city | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | San Antonio | Crystal City | Eagle Pass | Laredo | Weslaco | Robstown |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Households in sample [1] | 446 | 99 | 80 | 78 | 39 | 77 | 73 |
| Persons: | | | | | | | |
| Total | 2,905 | 678 | 502 | 463 | 260 | 505 | 497 |
| Per household | 6.5 | 6.8 | 6.3 | 5.9 | 6.7 | 6.6 | 6.8 |
| Migratory workers: | | | | | | | |
| Total | 1,334 | 332 | 250 | 198 | 134 | 215 | 205 |
| Per household | 3.0 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 3.4 | 2.8 | 2.8 |
| Nonworker migrants: | | | | | | | |
| Total | 1,235 | 271 | 214 | 166 | 101 | 236 | 247 |
| Per household | 2.8 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 3.4 |
| Nonmigrants: | | | | | | | |
| Total | 336 | 75 | 38 | 99 | 25 | 54 | 45 |
| Per household | .8 | .8 | .5 | 1.3 | .6 | .7 | .6 |
| Households whose range of movement was— | | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 135 | 40 | 11 | 4 | 8 | 28 | 44 |
| Interstate | 161 | 31 | 35 | 43 | 20 | 25 | 7 |
| Both | 150 | 28 | 34 | 31 | 11 | 24 | 22 |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Percentage of persons who— | | | | | | | |
| Did migratory farmwork | 46 | 49 | 50 | 43 | 52 | 43 | 41 |
| Migrated but did not work | 42 | 40 | 43 | 36 | 39 | 47 | 50 |
| Stayed at home | 12 | 11 | 7 | 21 | 9 | 10 | 9 |
| Percentage of households whose range of movement was— | | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 30 | 41 | 14 | 5 | 21 | 36 | 60 |
| Interstate | 36 | 31 | 44 | 55 | 51 | 33 | 10 |
| Both | 34 | 28 | 42 | 40 | 28 | 31 | 30 |

[1] See section on method of the survey in Introduction, p. 5.

The average number of workers per household during the migration period was 3.0, or more than twice as many as reported doing work at the home base (table 15). Ordinarily, migratory families have children who are too young to work, and the usual solution of the problem is to take them along. This tendency was stronger among families who migrated only within Texas than among those who migrated to other States. Nonworkers were more numerous than workers among the migrants from Weslaco and Robstown, and it was in these centers that intrastate migrants were most numerous. In general, however, nonworkers were almost as numerous as workers in the migrant households.

Actually, the number of workers was somewhat larger than these figures would indicate. Only those persons 10 years old and over were questioned in regard to their employment. Parents sometimes indicated that their children under 10 had been such good workers they should have been included in the report.

A few people in the households (1 in 8) were left at home. These persons included mothers with very young babies, persons too old to work, and others not in condition to migrate.

## Range of Movement

For purposes of analysis, the migratory households were classified into three groups according to their range of movement. Households that migrate only in Texas comprise the first group. Almost without exception, members of this group follow the cotton harvest from some point in southern Texas to the High Plains. Second are the interstate migrants, who usually leave the State to work in sugar beets or canning crops in some of the North Central States. The most significant variation from this pattern is the cotton movement that continues into Oklahoma, New Mexico, or Arizona. The third major group is made up of those who move to another State for the spring crops, then swing into the cotton migration somewhere in Texas.

BN-8876X

*A crew of Spanish-American workers in Michigan. Apparently some wives and youth were reticent about appearing in the picture.*

Intrastate migrants were especially numerous in Robstown, which is an important point in the cotton migration. They were numerous also in San Antonio and Weslaco, but migrants from the more westerly centers, Crystal City, Eagle Pass, and Laredo, were usually vegetable workers rather than cottonpickers; they moved to the sugar beet, vegetable, and fruit crops in other States. Some workers engaged in both types of work. Usually, they moved to one of the Northern States first and then worked in the cotton harvest on their way home. This work might be confined to the High Plains, but at times it involved movement within the State.

The three groups of migrants were rather evenly divided in the sample. Estimates of Texas Employment Commission officials indicate a distribution of about 32 percent intrastate, 33 percent interstate, and 35 percent in-and-out-of-State migrants.[5]

## Age and Sex of the Workers

In the 446 households surveyed, there were 1,334 migrant workers (table 1). Approximately half of these (49 percent) were household heads or their wives (table 2). Working wives were only a little more than half as numerous as working husbands. Among Spanish-American families, the wife usually works along with the husband until she has borne him children to work by his side. After that, her place is in the home.[6] This custom is not strictly observed among migratory families, possibly because the mother's presence in the field is necessary in order to keep the younger members of the family at work. Approximately half of the wives worked during the period of migration. Very few of them worked at the home base.

Approximately three-fourths of the husbands were in the age bracket of 25 to 55 years, with the largest number in the 45- to 54-year age group. The highest proportion of the working wives, however, were in the 25- to 34-year age group. Apparently, as the wives grow older, they participate less in fieldwork. Women over 55 made up only 7 percent of the workers among wives and female heads of households, while 21 percent of the males were in this age group. Spanish-American women are often less enthusiastic than their husbands about migratory and fieldwork.

A fifth of the workers were school children at the time of the survey. Boys outnumbered girls by about 25 percent; apparently some girls of school age did not do migratory work. One-third of the school youth who worked—52 boys and 41 girls—were under 14 years of age.

Boys also outnumbered girls among youth not in school at the time of the survey but who had done migratory work the previous season.

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[5] See pages 4 and 5 for conditions affecting sample numbers and Texas Employment Commission estimates.

[6] See Not With the Fist (*31*). An excellent presentation of culture patterns of the Spanish American in the United States.

TABLE 2.—*Household status, age, and sex, southern Texas migratory farmworkers, January 1957, and Texas labor force, 1950*

| Household status and age | Male | | | Female | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Migratory farmworkers | | Texas labor force[1] | Migratory farmworkers | | Texas labor force[1] |
| | *Number* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| All workers aged— | | | | | | |
| Under 25 years | 379 | 47 | 24 | 272 | 51 | 24 |
| 25 to 34 years | 120 | 15 | 21 | 106 | 20 | 22 |
| 35 to 44 years | 105 | 13 | 19 | 78 | 14 | 19 |
| 45 to 54 years | 110 | 14 | 15 | 61 | 11 | 15 |
| 55 to 64 years | 63 | 8 | 12 | 14 | 3 | 10 |
| Over 65 years | 22 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 10 |
| Total | 799 | 100 | 100 | 534 | 100 | 100 |
| Household heads and wives aged— | | | | | | |
| Under 25 years | 32 | 8 | ---------- | 15 | 6 | ---------- |
| 25 to 34 years | 87 | 21 | ---------- | 78 | 32 | ---------- |
| 35 to 44 years | 95 | 23 | ---------- | 72 | 30 | ---------- |
| 45 to 54 years | 111 | 27 | ---------- | 61 | 25 | ---------- |
| 55 to 64 years | 63 | 16 | ---------- | 14 | 6 | ---------- |
| Over 65 years | 22 | 5 | ---------- | 3 | 1 | ---------- |
| Total | 410 | 100 | ---------- | 243 | 100 | ---------- |
| Schoolchildren aged— | | | | | | |
| 10 to 11 years | 14 | 9 | ---------- | 9 | 7 | ---------- |
| 12 to 13 years | 38 | 24 | ---------- | 32 | 26 | ---------- |
| 14 to 15 years | 50 | 32 | ---------- | 43 | 35 | ---------- |
| 16 to 17 years | 45 | 29 | ---------- | 34 | 27 | ---------- |
| Over 17 years | 10 | 6 | ---------- | 6 | 5 | ---------- |
| Total | 157 | 100 | ---------- | 124 | 100 | ---------- |
| Nonschool children aged— | | | | | | |
| Under 14 years | 4 | 4 | ---------- | 2 | 2 | ---------- |
| 14 to 15 years | 6 | 5 | ---------- | 15 | 19 | ---------- |
| 16 to 17 years | 32 | 29 | ---------- | 27 | 33 | ---------- |
| 18 to 19 years | 60 | 57 | ---------- | 34 | 42 | ---------- |
| Over 19 years | 5 | 5 | ---------- | 3 | 4 | ---------- |
| Total | 107 | 100 | ---------- | 81 | 100 | ---------- |
| Other persons aged— | | | | | | |
| Under 21 years | 30 | 25 | ---------- | 27 | 32 | ---------- |
| 21 to 24 years | 52 | 41 | ---------- | 25 | 29 | ---------- |
| 25 to 29 years | 22 | 17 | ---------- | 21 | 24 | ---------- |
| 30 to 34 years | 11 | 9 | ---------- | 7 | 8 | ---------- |
| Over 34 years | 10 | 8 | ---------- | 6 | 7 | ---------- |
| Total | 125 | 100 | ---------- | 86 | 100 | ---------- |

[1] Data from U.S. Census of Population (*33*).

Most of these young people were 16 to 19 years old. The girls probably went along to help take care of the children while the mother worked. Interviews often indicated that girls tended to draw away from fieldwork or to postpone getting into it as long as possible.

Persons in these households other than the immediate members of the family tended to be young people from 18 to 29 years of age. They were likely to be brothers or sisters of the husband or wife, sons-in-law or daughters-in-law, or more distant relatives. Again, the number of male workers exceeded the number of female workers by a wide margin.

The importance of children and young people in migratory work is apparent when their numbers are compared with the number of young people in the total labor force in Texas. Approximately half of all migratory farmworkers were less than 24 years old. The corresponding proportion for all persons in the labor force in the State was 24 percent. At the other extreme,

TABLE 3.—*Place of birth of migratory workers and period in which they moved to Texas, by household status, southern Texas, 1957*

| Place of birth and time of moving to Texas | All workers reporting | Household status | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Heads | Wives | Children | Others |
| Workers born in— | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Texas | 958 | 254 | 141 | 384 | 179 |
| Other States [1] | 21 | 2 | 4 | 15 | ---------- |
| Mexico | 349 | 189 | 63 | 64 | 33 |
| Total | 1,328 | 445 | 208 | 463 | 212 |
| Workers who moved from Mexico— | | | | | |
| Before 1930 | 164 | 119 | 37 | ---------- | 8 |
| 1930 to 1939 | 4 | 3 | ---------- | ---------- | 1 |
| 1940 to 1949 | 77 | 28 | 9 | 25 | 15 |
| 1950 to 1957 | 90 | 30 | 14 | 38 | 8 |
| Time not stated | 14 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 349 | 189 | 63 | 64 | 33 |
| Workers born in— | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Texas | 72 | 57 | 68 | 83 | 84 |
| Other States [1] | 2 | (2) | 2 | 3 | ---------- |
| Mexico | 26 | 43 | 30 | 14 | 16 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Workers who moved from Mexico— | | | | | |
| Before 1930 | 47 | 63 | 59 | ---------- | 24 |
| 1930 to 1939 | 1 | 1 | ---------- | ---------- | 3 |
| 1940 to 1949 | 22 | 15 | 14 | 39 | 46 |
| 1950 to 1957 | 26 | 16 | 22 | 59 | 24 |
| Time not stated | 4 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Migratory farmworkers in the sample were born in 10 States other than Texas.
[2] Less than 0.5 percent.

the percentage of older people was much lower. Among migratory workers, 11 percent of the males were 55 years old or over as compared with 21 percent of the males in the general labor force; and 3 percent of the females were 55 or over as compared with 20 percent of those in the general labor force.

Therefore, many workers move out of this type of work during their fifties or early sixties. Some of the elements that enter into this change are discussed later in this report.

## Place of Birth

Approximately three-fourths of the migratory workers were natives of the United States; 72 percent were born in Texas and 2 percent in Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado, and other States. A fourth of them were born in Mexico (table 3).

These proportions apply to the migratory group as a whole, but almost half of the heads of households and a third of the wives were born across the border, as compared with only 14 percent of the children. The accuracy of these figures cannot be verified. Ordinarily, parents gave their replies without hesitancy; they made no apparent effort to slant the answers in favor of birth in the United States. But the fact that many of these people had shifted back and forth across the border might lead one to expect a higher proportion of Mexican-born children.

## Time Workers First Came to Texas

To determine the exact time when some of these people had first arrived in the United States was difficult. Some had been back and forth so often they could not remember the year in which they had first come. They were asked, however, to give the time when they had first changed their residence. This would not include the time when they had jobs on this side of the border and homes in Mexico.

A majority of the parents born in Mexico first moved to the United States before 1930, but practically none came during the 1930's. Immigration was resumed during the 1940's and was continuing at the time of the survey. A majority of the children had come in since 1950. The other persons in these households were a varied group, of all ages and periods of arrival. Although only 16 percent were born in Mexico, almost a fourth of them had come to the United States during the 1940's, and a fourth had arrived later.

## Educational Attainment

Lack of educational opportunities for migrating children is an undesirable aspect of the migratory labor situation. Of necessity, educational programs are highly organized, and children who are irregular in attendance derive little advantage from them. The children of migratory workers may be kept busy with a little singing, drawing, and clay modeling, instead of being allowed to hamper regular classes.[7]

Spanish-American children have an added handicap in that ordinarily their knowledge of the English language is limited, and teachers, especially those in the Northern States, have little knowledge of Spanish. Thus, until the children have acquired the requisite command of English, they have very little chance of obtaining an education.

Migratory workers are also part of a highly organized system. When seasonal tasks are ready to be done, they must leave their home bases or they will be unable to find employment. Toward the end of the work season, they are urged to stay until the crops are in. Ordinarily, this means removing their children from school before the school year is over, then returning them to school a month or two after the school term has begun.

To add to this problem, the parents usually have a more vital interest in the income that the children can add to family finances than in their attendance at school. The children, too, are affected by these values and have little interest in education.

Educational leaders have begun to attack this problem from all angles. In some home-base areas, retardation because of the language has been practically eliminated. Beginning pupils are taught a 300-word English vocabulary as a first step (*22*). When this is done in the summer before their first year of school, the language handicap is reduced.

As a result of this campaign, a higher value is now placed on school attendance by both school officials and parents. Greater diligence in enforcing school-attendance laws has been helpful, but also many parents now appreciate the value of an education. Some leave children of school age with relatives until the school term is over. Others postpone their departure or hasten their return in an effort to meet school requirements.

The problem of school attendance is still critical, however, as evidenced by enrollment data from Crystal City. Total school enrollment there at the end of the first 6 weeks of the fall term of 1956 was 1,400. By January 1957, it had risen to 2,670. It is evident that coordination of educational programs in the work areas and at the home bases is essential.

Data from Crystal City show the marked increase in school attendance of Spanish-American pupils in recent years. In 1930, only 2 Spanish-American students were in high school; in 1945, there were 35; and in 1957, there were 160.

Evidence of the increased literacy of migratory workers may be seen in table 4. Of the 1,333 workers who reported in the survey, only 3 percent from 14 to 16 years of age had had no schooling, as compared with 16 percent of those from 20 to 24 years old and 68 percent of those 45 years old and over. Again, only 2 percent of the migrants 45 years old and over had finished grade school, as compared with 23 percent of those 20 to 24 years old.

Although the average level of education varies with age, certain facts about the migratory group as a whole stand out. One-third of them had had no education, and only 5 percent had gone beyond the grade-school level. Usually, they had had from 3 to 6 years of schooling, but many of the older workers had had no schooling.

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[7] See Children of the Harvest (*5*), for an account of the childhood experiences of the author as a migratory worker, with particular emphasis on education. For reasons for this type of curriculum, see The Education of the Migrant Child (*6*), and Fort Lupton Migrant School, Ft. Lupton, Colorado, 1958 (unpublished report by Ft. Lupton Consolidated Schools, Weld County, Colo.).

**TABLE 4.**—*Educational attainment of migratory farmworkers, by age, southern Texas, 1957*

| Age group | All workers reporting | Grades in school | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | None | 1 to 2 | 3 to 4 | 5 to 6 | 7 to 8 | 9 to 11 | 12 | Over 12 |
| All workers aged— | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| 14 to 16 years | 214 | 7 | 22 | 63 | 84 | 34 | 4 | ------- | ------- |
| 17 to 19 years | 275 | 17 | 7 | 61 | 83 | 66 | 34 | 6 | 1 |
| 20 to 24 years | 160 | 26 | 10 | 35 | 52 | 19 | 15 | 3 | ------- |
| 25 to 44 years | 401 | 171 | 44 | 92 | 65 | 22 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Over 44 years | 283 | 192 | 26 | 41 | 16 | 7 | ------- | ------- | 1 |
| Total | 1,333 | 413 | 109 | 292 | 300 | 148 | 58 | 10 | 3 |
| All workers aged— | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| 14 to 16 years | 100 | 3 | 10 | 30 | 39 | 16 | 2 | ------- | ------- |
| 17 to 19 years | 100 | 6 | 3 | 22 | 30 | 24 | 13 | 2 | (1) |
| 20 to 24 years | 100 | 16 | 6 | 22 | 33 | 12 | 9 | 2 | ------- |
| 25 to 44 years | 100 | 43 | 11 | 23 | 16 | 6 | 1 | (1) | (1) |
| Over 44 years | 100 | 68 | 9 | 15 | 6 | 2 | ------- | ------- | (1) |
| Total | 100 | 31 | 8 | 22 | 23 | 11 | 4 | 1 | (1) |

[1] Less than 0.5 percent.

Thus migrant schoolchildren can expect little help from their parents with their lessons.

Some idea of the educational retardation among the youth of this group can be gained from examining the school records of those from 14 to 16 years old. A pupil who starts to school at the age of 6 and advances to a new grade each year should be in the 9th grade at age 14, in the 10th at 15, and in the 11th at 16. Yet only 4 of the 214 in the 14- to 16-year age group were in grades 9 to 11. Practically all were retarded to some extent:

- 16 percent were from 1 to 2 years below their normal grade
- 39 percent were from 3 to 4 years below their normal grade
- 29 percent were from 5 to 6 years below their normal grade
- 14 percent were 8 years or more below their normal grade.

Migration still means irregular school attendance, retardation, and sacrifice of future economic opportunity for present needs.

Recent reports from work areas indicate that school officials in these areas are also beginning to set up special educational programs to meet the problem of migrant education. The programs at Hollandale and Fisher, Minn., and at Ft. Lupton, Wiggins, and Rocky Ford, Colo., have been outstanding (*6*). They emphasize a summer educational program geared to the special needs of the children enrolled. Skills that can be put to practical use are stressed—reading and writing, applied arithmetic, health care, and physical education (*43*).

Enforcement of school-attendance laws in some work areas has had excellent results. A report from Hollandale, Minn., indicates that school attendance of migrant children there has been nearly 100 percent for the last 3 years (*15*). Officials in other areas also have found that it is not difficult to get the children of migrant workers enrolled in school if some time is taken to talk with the parents and overcome any resistance they may have. But the seriousness of the situation was stated by officials of the Crystal City school system. Only 10 percent of their pupils had had any schooling while they were away from home base.

**Education and Place of Birth.**—When the educational level of workers born in the United States is compared with that of workers born in Mexico, the differences are slighter than might be expected. Although the number of those born in the United States who have had no education is only half as great as the comparable number born in Mexico, the proportions with educational attainments of one to four grades are similar (table 5). Continuation in school, however, was greater among those born in this country.

Data were not obtained as to whether the workers born in Mexico had come to this country before, after, or during their school years.

TABLE 5.—*Educational attainment of migratory farmworkers, by age and place of birth, southern Texas, 1957*

| Place of birth and age | All workers reporting | Grades in school | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | None | 1 to 2 | 3 to 4 | 5 to 6 | 7 to 8 | 9 to 10 | 11 to 12 | Over 12 |
| Workers— | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Born in Mexico | 348 | 168 | 27 | 72 | 60 | 14 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Born in Texas | 956 | 241 | 78 | 214 | 232 | 129 | 52 | 8 | 2 |
| Total | 1,304 | 409 | 105 | 286 | 292 | 143 | 56 | 10 | 3 |
| All workers— | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Born in Mexico | 100 | 48 | 8 | 21 | 17 | 4 | 1 | 1 | ([1]) |
| Born in Texas | 100 | 25 | 8 | 22 | 24 | 14 | 6 | 1 | ([1]) |
| Total | 100 | 31 | 8 | 22 | 23 | 11 | 4 | 1 | ([1]) |
| All workers aged— | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 to 15 years: | | | | | | | | | |
| Born in Mexico | 100 | 5 | 10 | 30 | 40 | 15 | -------- | -------- | -------- |
| Born in Texas | 100 | 5 | 9 | 30 | 40 | 14 | 2 | -------- | -------- |
| 16 to 19 years: | | | | | | | | | |
| Born in Mexico | 100 | 18 | 2 | 21 | 37 | 12 | 6 | 4 | -------- |
| Born in Texas | 100 | 3 | 2 | 22 | 28 | 28 | 14 | 2 | 1 |
| 20 to 24 years: | | | | | | | | | |
| Born in Mexico | 100 | 14 | 9 | 23 | 45 | 5 | 4 | -------- | -------- |
| Born in Texas | 100 | 17 | 6 | 22 | 30 | 13 | 10 | 2 | -------- |
| 25 to 44 years: | | | | | | | | | |
| Born in Mexico | 100 | 46 | 9 | 30 | 13 | 2 | -------- | -------- | -------- |
| Born in Texas | 100 | 41 | 12 | 21 | 17 | 7 | 2 | ([1]) | ([1]) |
| 45 years and over: | | | | | | | | | |
| Born in Mexico | 100 | 70 | 8 | 14 | 7 | 1 | -------- | -------- | -------- |
| Born in Texas | 100 | 64 | 10 | 17 | 5 | 4 | -------- | -------- | -------- |

[1] Less than 0.5 percent.

However, persons educated in Mexico and those who have recently crossed the border might be expected to be at a considerable disadvantage in terms of education as compared with those born and educated in the United States.

**Education of Heads of Households.**—The Spanish-American family is patriarchal; the head makes most of the decisions concerning schooling, work, migration, and other matters that affect the group. His education, therefore, is important. More than half of the family heads had had no education, and only 6 percent had gone to school past the sixth grade (table 6). Of those 45 years old or over, 69 percent had had no education and only 3 percent had gone beyond the sixth grade. These people regard their children primarily as workers; they do not like to take them out of the fields to go to school.

**Education and Range of Movement.**—It was anticipated that the educational level of the family head might be connected with the tendency of the family group to migrate to a number of different locations. This did not prove to be the case. A comparison of educational level with number of work locations during 1956 showed no relationship. A comparison with range or type of movement showed a slight tendency for the more literate heads either to engage in interstate movement or to combine interstate and intrastate employment.

It seems probable that most migrants go where they do because of present or past contacts with recruiting agents. Where the migrants from a particular locality go may depend largely on which company agent or crew leader has contacts in their home localities. The recruiting agents select the workers and often have as much to do with their destination as do the workers themselves.

## Length of Time in Migratory Work

About one-fifth of the household heads might be termed long-time migrants, that is, they were doing migratory farmwork before World War II (table 7). The proportion of short-time mi-

TABLE 6.—*Educational attainment of heads of migratory households, by age and range of movement, southern Texas, 1957*

| Age and range of movement | All household heads reporting | Grades in school | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | None | 1 to 2 | 3 to 4 | 5 to 6 | 7 to 8 | 9 and over |
| | *Heads* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| All household heads | 445 | 246 | 39 | 77 | 55 | 22 | 6 |
| Household heads aged— | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 years | 34 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 4 | 2 |
| 25 to 44 years | 199 | 92 | 20 | 40 | 31 | 12 | 4 |
| Over 44 years | 212 | 147 | 16 | 30 | 13 | 6 | -------- |
| Household heads whose range of movement was— | | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 135 | 77 | 16 | 25 | 12 | 4 | 1 |
| Interstate | 160 | 82 | 8 | 34 | 24 | 9 | 3 |
| Both | 150 | 87 | 15 | 18 | 19 | 9 | 2 |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| All household heads | 100 | 55 | 9 | 17 | 13 | 5 | 1 |
| Household heads aged— | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 years | 100 | 20 | 9 | 20 | 33 | 12 | 6 |
| 25 to 44 years | 100 | 46 | 10 | 20 | 16 | 6 | 2 |
| Over 44 years | 100 | 69 | 8 | 14 | 6 | 3 | -------- |
| Household heads whose range of movement was— | | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 100 | 57 | 12 | 18 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Interstate | 100 | 51 | 5 | 22 | 15 | 5 | 2 |
| Both | 100 | 58 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 1 |

grants is high. More than a third started migrating between 1950 and 1956. Apparently, the turnover of migrants has been rapid.

Almost half of the wives (43 percent) reported that they had begun migratory work after 1950. Women, therefore, discontinue this type of work more quickly than men. Only 20 percent of the children had begun work before 1950. Data were not obtained as to the number of years in which the children had migrated before starting to work.

Intrastate workers tend to stay with this type of work somewhat longer than do those who go outside the State. Twenty-eight percent of the heads and 19 percent of the wives in this stream in 1956 had been doing migratory work before World War II. A little less than 30 percent of the heads had started migrating after 1950.

Short-time migrants, therefore, are more numerous in the out-of-State streams. This may result from selection in recruitment, or it may be due to greater movement out of migratory work in the northern work areas.

### Employment Before Migrating

Almost two-thirds of the heads of migratory households reported farmwork as their occupation before they began migrating. Probably the surprising thing is that more than a third said they had been in nonfarm employment. The nonfarm jobs most frequently reported included working in a storage or ice plant, in a cannery, at construction work, as a musician, and in a sawmill. Most of these are seasonal jobs, and it seems probable that as the family grew the head had to move into employment that provided a more regular source of income.

## ANNUAL MIGRATION PATTERNS

The patterns of movement of Spanish-American workers from southern Texas developed as a response to efforts of recruiters to obtain seasonal labor supplies. During the 1850's and 1860's, the cattle and sheep industries expanded and the first movement out of the area began. Several decades later, cotton production developed in eastern Texas, and the growers went south to obtain their workers (*37, p. 1801*). After a few years, sugarcane growers in Louisiana began sending recruiters into the area. Recruiters for cotton growers in Oklahoma and for

TABLE 7.—*Period in which household heads and wives in migratory households began migratory farmwork, by range of movement, southern Texas*

| Item | All workers reporting | Range of movement | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Intrastate | Interstate | Both |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Household heads | 445 | 134 | 162 | 149 |
| Wives | 207 | 58 | 73 | 76 |
| Total | 652 | 192 | 235 | 225 |
| Household heads who became migratory workers— | | | | |
| Before 1930 | 38 | 15 | 12 | 11 |
| 1930 to 1939 | 57 | 22 | 19 | 16 |
| 1940 to 1944 | 80 | 31 | 20 | 29 |
| 1945 to 1949 | 107 | 24 | 42 | 41 |
| 1950 to 1956 | 153 | 39 | 66 | 48 |
| Not stated | 10 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Wives who became migratory workers— | | | | |
| Before 1930 | 12 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| 1930 to 1939 | 24 | 5 | 11 | 8 |
| 1940 to 1944 | 32 | 12 | 8 | 12 |
| 1945 to 1949 | 48 | 15 | 14 | 19 |
| 1950 to 1956 | 88 | 20 | 34 | 34 |
| Not stated | 3 | ---------- | 2 | 1 |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Household heads who became migratory workers— | | | | |
| Before 1930 | 9 | 11 | 7 | 7 |
| 1930 to 1939 | 13 | 17 | 12 | 11 |
| 1940 to 1945 | 18 | 23 | 12 | 19 |
| 1946 to 1949 | 24 | 18 | 26 | 28 |
| 1950 to 1956 | 34 | 29 | 41 | 32 |
| Not stated | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Wives who became migratory workers— | | | | |
| Before 1930 | 6 | 10 | 5 | 3 |
| 1930 to 1939 | 12 | 9 | 15 | 11 |
| 1940 to 1945 | 15 | 21 | 11 | 16 |
| 1946 to 1949 | 23 | 26 | 19 | 25 |
| 1950 to 1956 | 43 | 34 | 47 | 44 |
| Not stated | 1 | ---------- | 3 | 1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Data in regard to children and other persons not presented. Three-fourths of the children and half the other persons had started migrating since 1950.

sugar-beet companies in Colorado and Michigan soon began a recruitment contest. Recruiters for wheat growers in Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and other grain States started a flow of workers to the wheat harvest. The recruiters returned year after year and thus established the early paths of labor movement both within and outside the State. They established also the labor movement across the Rio Grande. Much of this movement was seasonal; but, wherever the Spanish-Americans went, some stayed and set up new labor-supply centers. No attempt was made to control the movement across the river until enactment of a literacy test in 1917.

The patterns of movement both within and outside Texas have changed with local developments in agriculture. In fact, the pattern of agricultural development in both Texas and the central part of the country has depended largely on the availability of an inexpensive but willing supply of hand labor (*19*). In eastern Texas, production of cotton has declined. Demand for seasonal workers is now highest in the High Plains, the Coastal Bend area, and the lower Rio Grande Valley.

To the agricultural developments mentioned as establishing streams of movement outside the State can be added the production of canning crops in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota; of tomatoes in Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois; of potatoes in areas of North Dakota, Idaho, Colorado, and California; and, more recently, of fruits in areas of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, California, Oregon, Washington, and other States.

Although most of these production areas are now fairly stable, their demand for labor is irregular. Since 1950, for example, a series of droughts has affected cotton production in Texas. These droughts followed no set pattern; they affected a different part of the State each year (*29*). According to census data, Reeves County produced 37,000 bales of cotton in 1949 and 113,000 in 1954, while Ellis County produced 107,000 in 1949 and only 37,000 in 1954. Under these circumstances, a uniform flow of labor to the two counties would be disastrous to both workers and farmers. Some program of information and guidance is essential. Variations in weather are almost as great in the other areas in which Spanish-American workers are employed.

Demand is changing also so far as the type of worker that growers prefer or are able to hire is concerned. Formerly, Anglo-Americans and Russo-Germans were used in many of the seasonal areas and operations that now use Spanish-American labor. In turn, the Spanish-American workers, both domestic and illegal, are gradually being replaced by workers imported from Mexico. In 1956, 200,000 imported workers were employed in Texas, and half of these were in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

The number of workers needed in some operations, such as the sugar-beet harvest, has been reduced greatly by mechanization. But the demand is still variable because of weather or shortening of the work season.

Instability of movement arises also because of the reactions of the workers. If earnings in an area have been unusually low or if they have had some misunderstanding with employers there, workers may refuse to return to that area. Also, they may refuse to work in fields or in areas in which imported workers are used. Either crew leaders or workers may be responsible for these reactions.

Consequently, the demand for and the supply of workers and their patterns of movement shift from year to year. The migration patterns reported by the migrants in the 1957 survey relate particularly to the 1956 agricultural season. These patterns of movement were affected by droughts in central and eastern Texas and by too much early season rainfall in the Lake States. Equally important was the substitution of varying amounts of imported labor in many areas in which the migrants from southern Texas were formerly the major source of supply.

## Intrastate Patterns

The movement of migratory workers in Texas is customarily a matter of following the cotton harvests, which begin in the lower Rio Grande Valley in June and end in the High Plains in November or December. The movement follows a northeasterly course and includes picking the cotton in the northeastern part of the State before the trip to the High Plains is made. These paths were not followed closely during the 1956 season (fig. 2). Few workers went to the Rio Grande Valley. Fewer than usual went to the central and northeastern parts of the State. These changes in movement were associated largely with drought, light crop yields, and unfavorable employment experience in previous years.

Of the 2,569 migrants reported in the 1957 survey, 738 migrated only within the State. Of these, 376 were workers. Their patterns of movement showed decided differences according to their home-base cities. Most of the 40 intrastate families in San Antonio started in the Coastal Bend area around Corpus Christi, then moved to the High Plains. Workers interviewed in Robstown started the cotton season at home; from there they scattered to the important cotton areas of the State.

Most cottonpickers living in Weslaco started the season there, then moved directly to the High Plains. Workers in the Winter Garden area—Crystal City, Eagle Pass, and Laredo—followed no distinct pattern.

Concerted movement of workers of one locality to a few work areas suggests that a few recruitment agencies guided or initiated much of the movement. When migration was to many points, it was likely to be of the freewheeling type.

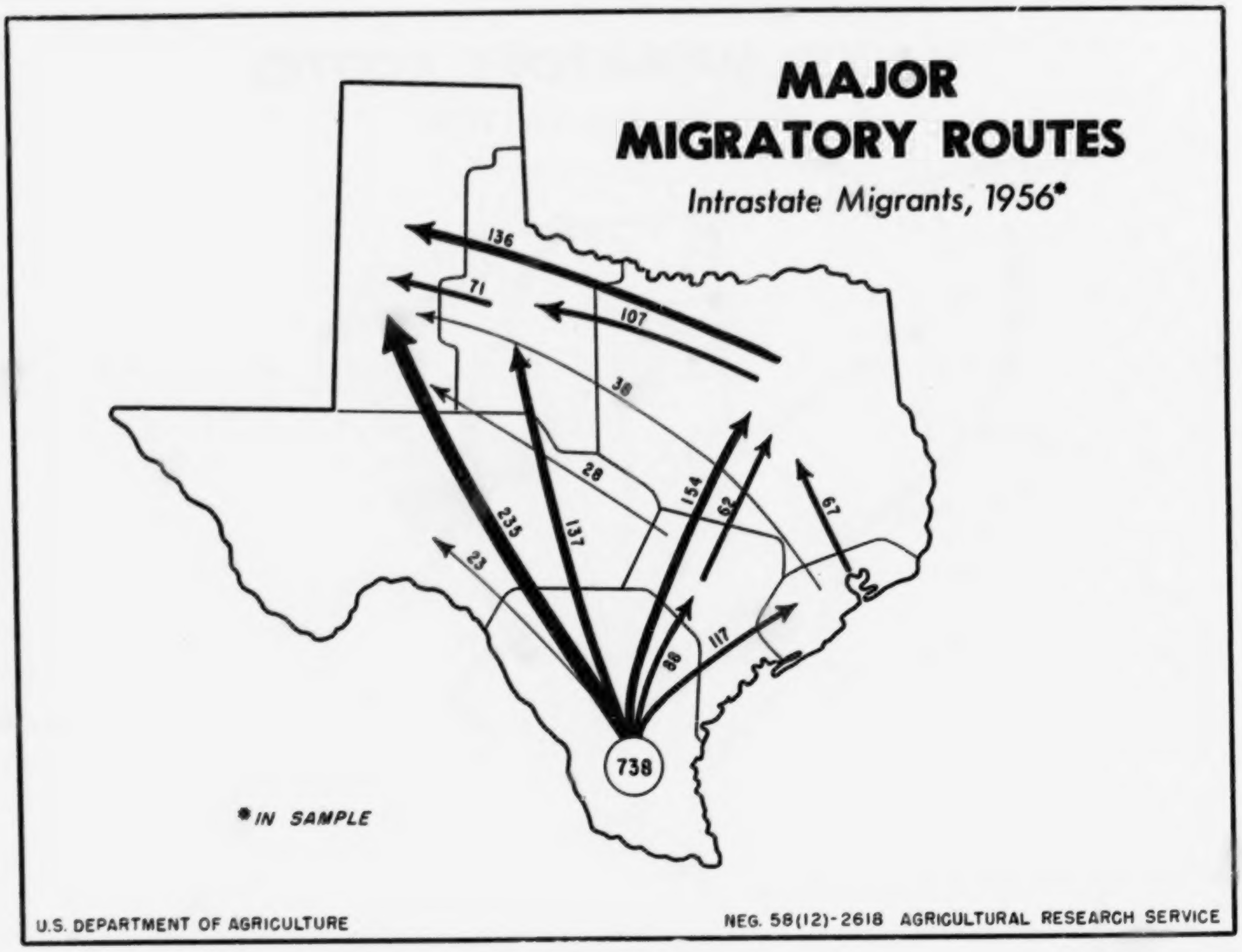

MAJOR
MIGRATORY ROUTES
Intrastate Migrants, 1956*
136
71
107
38
28
235
137
154
62
67
23
88
117
738
*IN SAMPLE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NEG. 58(12)-2618 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

FIGURE 2

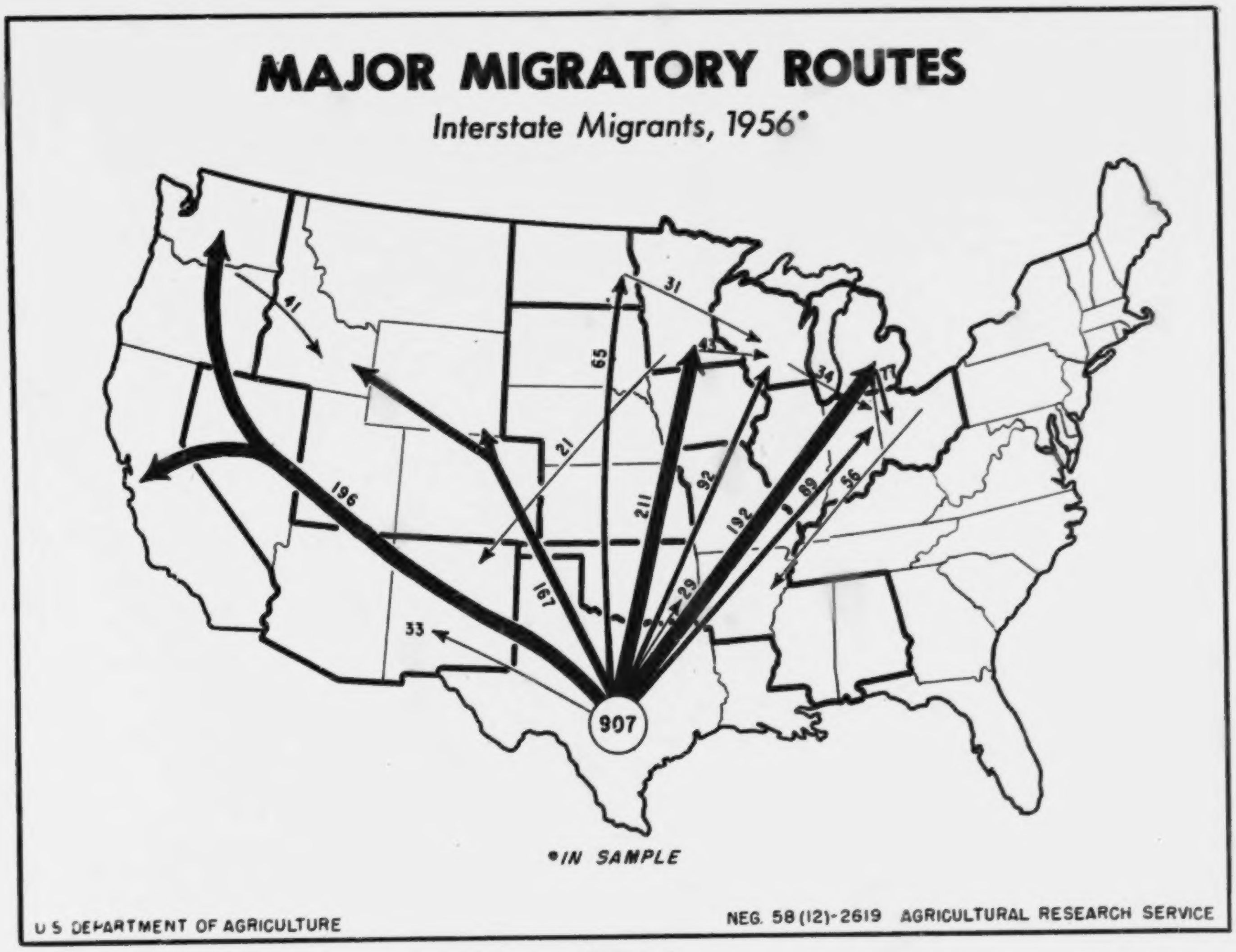
## Interstate Patterns

Several well-established patterns of movement exist between South Texas and seasonal works areas in the Northern States. Most important of these is the movement to Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana, and Ohio. Second in importance is the movement to the sugar-beet areas in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. A third pattern of movement to cotton and vegetable harvests on the Pacific coast and in the Southwest is becoming more important as the movement of Anglo-American workers to these areas subsides. These patterns were generally followed by the migrants surveyed in 1957.

Some migrants move only between their home base and the work areas outside the State. Their patterns of movement are shown in figure 3. There were 907 of these migrants in the sample, and 452 of them did some work during the migratory trip. Other migrant households cut short their work in other States so as to be able to make all or part of the cottonpicking circuit in Texas. They are labeled in figures 4 and 5 as in-and-out-of-State migrants. There were 926 of these people, and 492 reported that they had worked while away from home base.

Interstate migration patterns varied widely according to the home base of the migrant family, probably because recruiters for a company tend to specialize in particular areas. They start a flow of workers to the areas they represent, and the flow tends to continue. This flow may lead to a maldistribution of labor.

The major movement of these interstate migrants was to Michigan, Wisconsin, or Minnesota and occurred in May or June. The workers moved about in these States and also in Indiana,



MAJOR MIGRATORY ROUTES

*Interstate Migrants, 1956**

*IN SAMPLE

U S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NEG. 58 (12)-2619 AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

FIGURE 3

Ohio, and Illinois; they returned to Texas in October. Some returned by way of the High Plains, where they picked cotton, while others went directly to their home bases. This type of movement was especially common among the migratory workers from San Antonio, Crystal City, and Laredo.

The second type of movement was to Colorado and occurred in May. Some workers returned to Texas in July for the cotton harvest, but others remained in the Mountain States until October, when they, too, returned to enter the cotton harvest. Those in the first group usually lived at Weslaco or Robstown; they returned home in time to participate in the local harvests. The rest came from other home-base areas; they picked cotton only in the High Plains.

A small proportion of the interstate migrants left in March or April to work in the West Coast States or Idaho. They returned to their home base in November or December, after stopping for the potato harvest in Idaho or the cotton harvest in Arizona or Texas. Migration of this kind was especially common among workers living in Eagle Pass.

Some families from Robstown and Weslaco were involved in a special type of out-of-State movement. They followed the cotton harvest from Texas into Oklahoma or Missouri and finished the season there instead of going to the High Plains.

These migration patterns have been described in some detail because they indicate a good deal of rationality in the movement of many of these people. This overall rationality, however, overlooks the fact that local crop failures in a particular season may result in long trips for a few days of work. What is lacking is effective cooperation between many migrants and the State employment services, which have data in regard

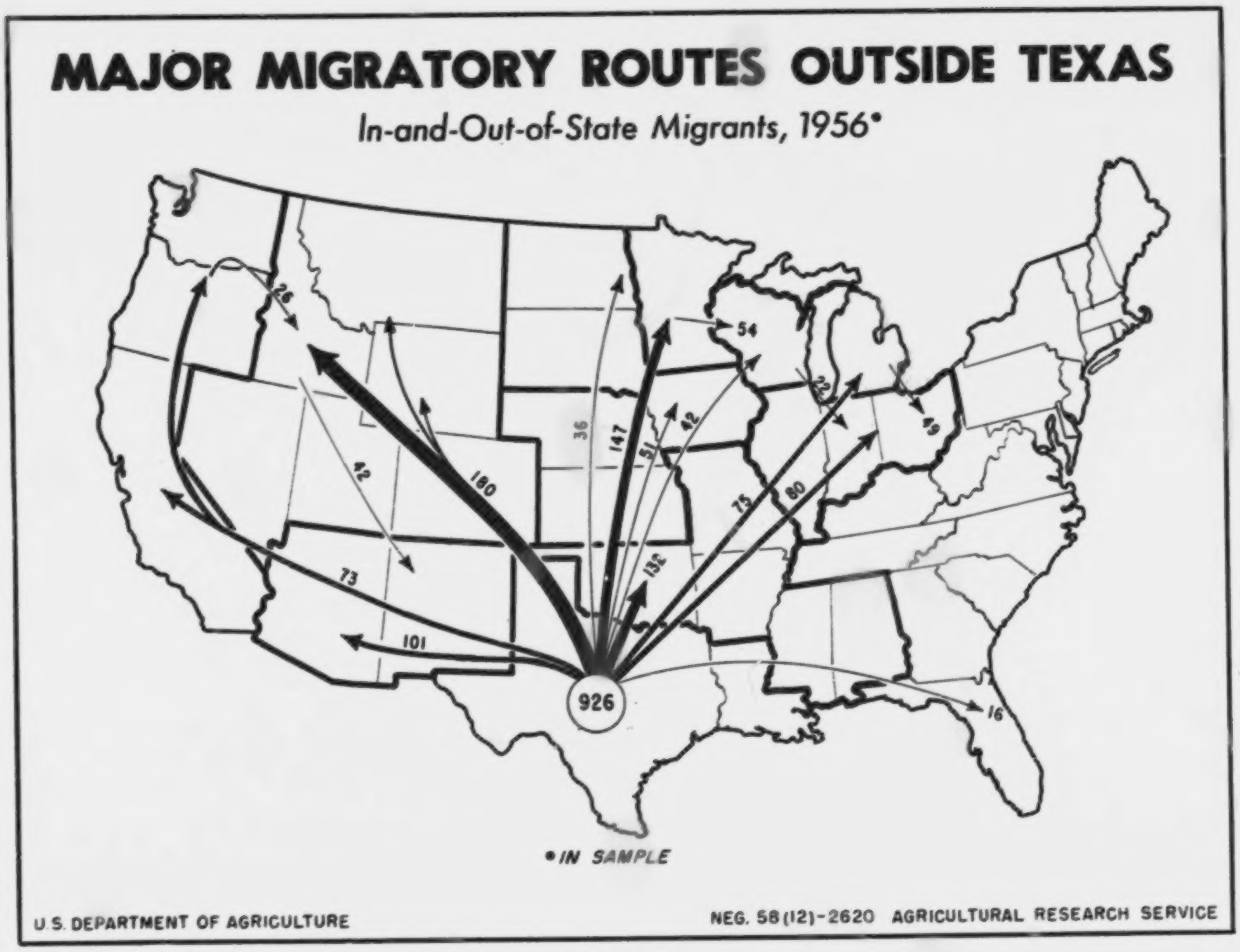

MAJOR MIGRATORY ROUTES OUTSIDE TEXAS
In-and-Out-of-State Migrants, 1956*
26
42
180
36
147
31
42
54
22
49
75
80
132
73
101
926
16
*IN SAMPLE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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FIGURE 4

to crop conditions and the demand for and the supply of labor, area by area and week by week. Progress, however, is being made in this direction.

No count of individual workers by migratory patterns or by States was made, but a general idea of the volume of movement to particular States can be obtained from tables 25 and 26, which show the number of workers who had engaged in different types of work by States. One individual, of course, might engage in several different types of work. These data show the Lake States to be next in importance to Texas so far as migratory work is concerned. There were 291 reports of work in Michigan, 195 in Minnesota, and 195 in Wisconsin. In the adjacent States, there were 82 reports of work in Ohio, 68 in North Dakota, 58 in Illinois, and 55 in Indiana. In the Mountain area, there were 117 reports of work in Colorado, 130 in Idaho, and 35 in Montana. This is the secondary area of employment. On the west coast, there were 59 reports in Washington, 32 in Oregon, and 38 in California.

Competition from Spanish-American workers from California keeps the numbers of Texas workers down in this area. Sixty workers picked cotton in Arizona, 50 in Oklahoma, and 41 in Missouri, but very few went to the Southeastern States for the cotton harvest.

These figures emphasize the competitive aspect of the labor movement from southern Texas. In spring, sugar-beet growers in Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, and other States compete for these workers. In summer, growers of vegetable and fruit crops in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and other States try to attract or hold them. During the fall, when tomatoes, potatoes, sugar beets, and cotton are

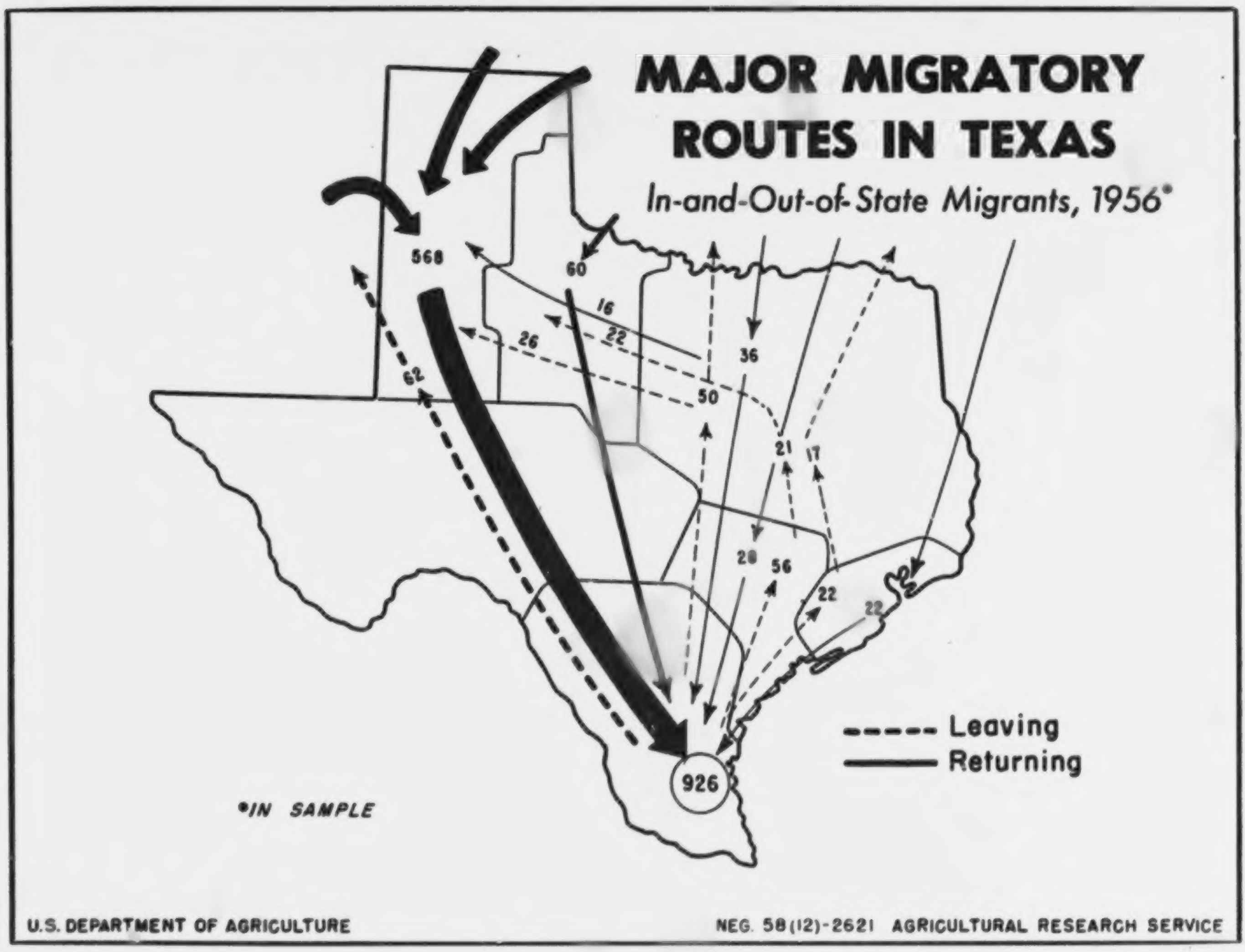

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FIGURE 5

harvested in many States, competition is particularly keen. The area of use for these workers is so broad that coordination is difficult.

## Months of Departure and Return

The workers may migrate from their home bases in any month of the year. None of those in the sample group moved in December, but movement in this month can be expected to increase now that migration to Florida is becoming part of the Spanish-American migration pattern. Outward movement of migratory workers depends on the timing and volume of seasonal operations; it may vary from year to year. Therefore, the data presented apply directly to the year 1956; they might vary for other years.

For the migratory group as a whole, the usual pattern was to leave in May and return in November (table 8). A few families left home in January or February 1956 and did not return until January 1957, while a few others returned in the month in which they left.

A little less than 40 percent of the migrants left home in May and another 40 percent in the period from June to November. The rest had gone before May.

Again, almost 40 percent of the migrants returned to their home bases in November. A third had returned before that month, and a little more than a fourth returned later.

Migrants who worked only in Texas did not need to leave home early in the season. Ordinarily, they left home base during the period from May to September; the greatest movement came during August (table 8). A few returned home early, but most returned in November or December.

Interstate migrants followed a different

TABLE 8.—*Month migratory farmworkers left home base and month returned, by range of movement, southern Texas, 1956*

| Range of movement and month left home | All workers reporting | Month returned | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1956 | | | | | Jan. 1957 |
| | | Before Sept. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| All workers | 1,320 | 81 | 107 | 258 | 501 | 313 | 60 |
| Intrastate workers who left home in— | | | | | | | |
| January or February | 5 | -------- | -------- | -------- | 4 | 1 | -------- |
| March | 4 | 2 | -------- | -------- | -------- | 2 | -------- |
| April | 10 | -------- | -------- | 10 | -------- | -------- | -------- |
| May | 55 | 17 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 10 |
| June | 65 | 17 | 5 | 6 | 21 | 16 | -------- |
| July | 62 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 21 | -------- |
| August | 92 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 40 | 26 | 4 |
| September | 66 | -------- | 4 | 4 | 37 | 20 | 1 |
| October or later | 17 | -------- | -------- | -------- | 6 | 11 | -------- |
| Total | 376 | 49 | 35 | 43 | 125 | 109 | 15 |
| Interstate workers who left home in— | | | | | | | |
| January or February | 12 | -------- | 6 | -------- | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| March | 26 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 7 | -------- | 2 |
| April | 109 | 6 | 3 | 50 | 33 | 17 | -------- |
| May | 191 | 11 | 25 | 58 | 59 | 33 | 5 |
| June | 70 | 3 | 14 | 31 | 15 | 7 | -------- |
| July | 13 | -------- | 6 | 2 | 2 | 3 | -------- |
| August | 4 | -------- | 1 | 3 | -------- | -------- | -------- |
| September | 13 | -------- | -------- | 4 | 5 | 4 | -------- |
| October or later | 14 | -------- | -------- | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Total | 452 | 23 | 58 | 162 | 126 | 69 | 14 |
| In-and-out-of-State workers who left home in— | | | | | | | |
| January or February | 25 | 2 | -------- | 6 | 17 | -------- | -------- |
| March | 38 | 1 | -------- | 3 | 16 | 12 | 6 |
| April | 68 | 2 | 3 | 12 | 16 | 30 | 5 |
| May | 252 | 4 | 8 | 19 | 140 | 65 | 16 |
| June | 39 | -------- | 3 | 6 | 15 | 13 | 2 |
| July | 29 | -------- | -------- | 4 | 23 | 1 | 1 |
| August | 31 | -------- | -------- | 3 | 23 | 4 | 1 |
| October or later | 10 | -------- | -------- | -------- | -------- | 10 | -------- |
| Total | 492 | 9 | 14 | 53 | 250 | 135 | 31 |

schedule. Ordinarily, their movement started the latter part of April, was at a peak in May, and continued for some time in June. They returned in October and November, somewhat earlier than the cotton migrants.

Migrants who worked both within and outside the State left at about the same time as the other interstate migrants but remained at work until the end of the cotton season, or about a month longer than the others.

Earlier in this report, it was mentioned that the work season of these people interferes with the education of their children. The data indicate that only 74 of 376 intrastate workers left before school closed in the spring but that more than 300 returned too late for the opening of school in the fall. Of 452 interstate migrants, more than 300 left before school closed, and approximately 400 returned too late for the opening of the fall term. Of 492 in-and-out-of-State workers, almost 400 left before school was out, and very few were back in time for the opening. Apparently, the problem of educational opportunity for migrant children is not yet solved. Schooling in the work areas is a serious problem, and action concerning it is needed in many States.

The heaviest demand for these workers is during the late fall, so an early return to home base is difficult. Eventually, however, mechanization of the harvest in cotton, sugar beets, potatoes, and tomatoes could reverse this situation.

## Length of Time Away From Home Base

The length of time on the road varied directly with the range of movement (table 9). Usually intrastate migrants were away 50 to 99 days. A small percentage, however, returned within 50 days, while a few were away 200 days or longer. But very few (13 percent) of the interstate migrants returned within 100 days. Most were away 150 to 199 days, but a fifth remained away 200 days or longer. These trips, however, were short as compared with those of the workers who migrated both within and outside the State. A third of the latter were away for more than 200 days, and three-fourths were away for more than 150 days.

The shorter movements permit a worker to board up his home or pay his rent during the time he is away. He can still maintain many community and neighborhood ties. The longer movements make the wisdom of maintaining a single residence problematical, although migrants who have household goods need a place to keep them while they are away.

The length of stay away from home base varied also from one home-base area to another. Workers from San Antonio remained away the shortest length of time, 129 days; while those from Eagle Pass were away almost 50 days longer, or 177 days (table 10). These figures ran directly contrary to the local employment situation in the two centers, as more winter employment was available at Eagle Pass. A possible explanation is that there is more organized recruitment in San Antonio, and that the organized recruiters send the workers home at the end of the season. More freewheeling at Eagle Pass led to a more extensive movement in terms of both time and area covered.

## Number of Work Locations While on the Road

Some migrant families move rather erratically; others move to a definite work area and return. A third of the migrant families in the survey had moved to and from only one location away from home base (table 11). An additional half had added one or two work locations to the first and then returned. One family in five might be regarded as widely migratory; that is, it had gone to four, five, or up to eight different work areas during the 1956 season.

Interstate migration did not necessarily mean that the migrant worked in a large number of locations. More than half of the interstate migrants (56 percent) went to one location only. This compares with 43 percent of the intrastate migrants who worked in only one location away from home. Migrants who moved both within

TABLE 9.—*Periods southern Texas migratory farmworkers were away from home base, by range of movement, 1956*

| Length of stay away from home | All workers reporting | Range of movement | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Intrastate | Interstate | Both |
| Workers away from home— | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Under 50 days | 54 | 45 | 9 | - |
| 50 to 99 days | 266 | 169 | 53 | 44 |
| 100 to 149 days | 286 | 78 | 136 | 72 |
| 150 to 199 days | 442 | 62 | 165 | 215 |
| 200 days and over | 286 | 22 | 101 | 163 |
| Total | 1,334 | 376 | 464 | 494 |
| Workers away from home— | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Under 50 days | 4 | 12 | 2 | - |
| 50 to 99 days | 20 | 45 | 11 | 9 |
| 100 to 149 days | 22 | 21 | 29 | 15 |
| 150 to 199 days | 33 | 16 | 36 | 43 |
| 200 days and over | 21 | 6 | 22 | 33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

TABLE 10.—*Average number of days migratory farmworkers were away from home base, by home-base city and range of movement, southern Texas, 1956*

| Home-base city | All workers reporting | Average time away from home base | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All workers | Intrastate migrants | Interstate migrants | Both |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Days* | *Days* | *Days* |
| San Antonio | 337 | 129 | 90 | 138 | 171 |
| Crystal City | 251 | 173 | 96 | 167 | 195 |
| Eagle Pass | 195 | 177 | 104 | 170 | 194 |
| Laredo | 132 | 158 | 129 | 178 | 151 |
| Weslaco | 214 | 158 | 113 | 183 | 173 |
| Robstown | 205 | 143 | 116 | 94 | 208 |
| All cities | 1,334 | 154 | 106 | 161 | 180 |

and outside the State necessarily worked in two or more locations. Only 30 percent had worked in a minimum of two locations.

These circumstances arise from the fact that many interstate migrants worked for canning companies or other employers who shifted them from one crop to another or from one farm to another in the same locality. Some ginning companies in Texas also shifted workers from farm to farm but always within the same crop.

Intrastate workers were also more likely to have worked in five or more locations than those who had migrated outside the State. Again, work in several crops permitted more locational stability than work in only one crop.

One family in six among those who migrated both within and outside the State had worked in five or more different locations away from home base, and a few had worked in seven or eight. The lives of these people differ greatly from the lives of those who move to one place only and then return. Constant shifting to different types of makeshift housing, different working arrangements, and different degrees of community acceptance, necessarily affects the personalities of those concerned. Education of children becomes impossible; local ties to friends, relatives, and neighbors lose their strength; and the family becomes an isolated economic unit struggling for a bare living.

TABLE 11.—*Number of work locations of migratory households away from home base, by range of movement, southern Texas, 1956*

| Range of movement | All households reporting | Work locations away from home base | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 and over [1] |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Households whose range of movement was— | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 135 | 58 | 31 | 29 | 9 | 8 |
| Interstate | 160 | 89 | 29 | 32 | 6 | 4 |
| Both | 150 | ------- | 45 | 44 | 36 | 25 |
| Total | 445 | 147 | 105 | 105 | 51 | 37 |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Households whose range of movement was— | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 100 | 43 | 23 | 21 | 7 | 6 |
| Interstate | 100 | 56 | 18 | 20 | 4 | 2 |
| Both | 100 | ------- | 30 | 29 | 24 | 17 |
| Total | 100 | 33 | 24 | 24 | 11 | 8 |

---

[1] Workers reported up to 8 locations away from the home base. Locations should not be confused with jobs, as workers often had 2 or more jobs in the same location.

## RECRUITMENT AND MOVEMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS

The development of labor recruitment as a major business activity in southern Texas was mentioned earlier. It is still important in the area but is now conducted on a restricted basis. The Emigrant Agency Act calls for high fees for recruitment licenses on a county-by-county basis. Although this act is not rigidly enforced, it has served to deter recruiters from outside the State. In recent years, less than 10 licensed agencies have remained in business in the area. They recruited 39,997 workers in 1952; 34,682 in 1953; 36,244 in 1954; and 25,763 in 1955 (*28*). These workers were recruited mainly for work in Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota but also for employment in a dozen other States.

Activities of recruitment agents have been curtailed also because of mechanization of seasonal operations and other changes in the demand for labor. Wheat and sugarcane producers are no longer interested in Spanish-American workers. Cotton and sugar-beet growers have reduced their demands for these workers, partly because of mechanization and partly because of reduction of the domestic labor force.

The increasing difficulty of obtaining a supply of labor has also acted to reduce the size of the recruitment program. The number of people willing to be transported by truck to a distant point is decreasing; and heavy recruitment outlays may fail to obtain the needed supply of workers. Newly established safety requirements for vehicles now add to the financial hazard.

Equally important is the change that is underway from private to public recruitment agencies (*37, p. 1811*). This constitutes a major change in the recruitment and movement of labor. The intensive bargaining, labor-pirating, and other types of sharp dealing that were sometimes used in obtaining a supply of labor are becoming things of the past, as is the practice of transporting workers to distant points for short jobs and then letting them go. Instead, a placement program that considers all parties in the employment situation is being developed, as is coordination of movement to provide more complete employment for workers and more dependable service to employers.

Public employment service activities began in 1918 with recruitment of workers for the wheat harvest in the Panhandle and the North Central States (*29*). Recruitment of workers for other agricultural operations began a few years later. In 1935, the Texas State Employment Service was created and affiliated with the United States Employment Service. A broader program of recruitment, placement, and direction of migratory labor was initiated. During 1951, for example, 25,669 workers were recruited by the Texas service and referred to jobs in 22 States. Coordination of the activities of the Employment Service is gradually bringing about more regular migration of workers throughout the central part of the country.

As yet, much of the movement outside the State is stimulated by labor contractors. These contractors may be affiliated with either licensed agencies or the Texas State Employment Commission. More frequently, they operate independently. Efforts have been made at times to reduce the number of these contractors. Because of the language barrier, however, they have been necessary as a go-between for workers and employers.

In addition, some individuals and families strike out for themselves, using their own means of transportation. Most of them migrate as company recruits or crew members for several years, then feel themselves able to make their own job contacts.

The systematizing of all labor movement within Texas and to other States is still in the future, but progress in this direction is continuing. Interstate conferences have been held for a number of years to discuss comparative seasonal labor needs and means of coordinating the activities of State employment agencies and the Bureau of Employment Security of the U.S. Department of Labor to meet them (*12, 40*). The Annual Worker Plan, which sets up a program of work for the migrant before he leaves his home base, is used also (*10, 11, 46*).

### Crew Membership

Only 39 percent of the heads of households in the 1957 survey reported that they were members of crews at the time they left their home bases (table 12). The rest either went on their own in their own cars or in those of friends, or rode in a truck driven by a trucker for a recruitment agency.

Crew membership was lowest, 32 percent, among the interstate migrants and highest, 44 percent, among those who moved only within the State. Evidently those who range far from home are mainly individual recruits or persons who move for themselves.

TABLE 12.—*Crew membership of migratory households, by home-base city and range of movement, southern Texas, 1956*

| Home-base city and range of movement | All households reporting | Households that were members of crews | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Percent* |
| All households | 446 | 172 | 39 |
| Home-base city: | | | |
| San Antonio | 99 | 25 | 25 |
| Crystal City | 80 | 23 | 29 |
| Eagle Pass | 78 | 36 | 46 |
| Laredo | 39 | 15 | 38 |
| Weslaco | 77 | 41 | 53 |
| Robstown | 73 | 32 | 44 |
| Range of movement: | | | |
| Intrastate | 135 | 60 | 44 |
| Interstate | 161 | 52 | 32 |
| Both | 150 | 60 | 40 |

A study made in Texas in 1939 indicated that 60 percent of the intrastate workers traveled with crew leaders, 20 percent traveled on their own, and the rest used other means of transportation (*25*). Since that time, the crew system has changed.

## Method of Learning of Jobs Away From Home

Household heads who reported that they had left home base as members of crews were not questioned about their job contacts. It was assumed that the crew leader made all such arrangements for them. Those who did not belong to a crew when they left home were asked whether they had jobs before they left and how they had obtained work away from home.

More than two-thirds of the noncrew heads of households had jobs before they left home (table 13). Ordinarily, the jobs were for farmers they had contacted previously, but 1 in 8 had made arrangements with a factory agent and 1 in 12 with the Texas State Employment Service. Others had contacts with friends or relatives in the job area who had made work arrangements for them.

The term "freewheeler" may be applied appropriately to the households that moved without having any job arrangements before they left home. There were 84 of them, or approximately 20 percent of the total number of households. Almost half of these families migrated only within the State. A majority had either worked in the job area before or had friends or relatives there to help them get employment. The rest planned to rely on the employment service, crew leaders, or reports of work available.

This group of workers was asked how they had actually obtained work away from home. The highest percentage reported that they had obtained it by contacting the farmers themselves. Job contacts through friends and through the farmers for whom they had previously worked were frequent also.

A number of preseason job contacts are needed by most households in order to have a full schedule of work away from the home base. The workers were not questioned as to how many of these they had.

## Transportation and Financing

Forty percent of the families migrated in their own cars (table 14). In a few instances, they were traveling for a recruitment agent or a crew leader; but, in general, these workers traveled on their own. A few others traveled by public transportation, but most traveled by truck. Those traveling by truck could be either members of a crew or passengers in a truck operated by a trucker or commercial hauler.

Truck transportation is more common for the shorter hauls within the State than for interstate movement. More than two-thirds of the intrastate families were moved in this way. Approximately half of the interstate workers went in their own cars.

## Advances

Employers who want workers to travel a considerable distance to the work area often find it necessary to advance them funds to take care

TABLE 13.—*Method by which noncrew heads of migratory households from southern Texas learned about their jobs away from home, 1956*

| Method of obtaining job | All households reporting | Percentage— |  | Range of movement |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Of all heads | Of non-crew heads | Intrastate | Interstate | Both |
|  | *Number* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Household heads who were— |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Members of crews | 172 | 39 | -------- | 60 | 52 | 60 |
| Nonmembers of crews | [1] 265 | 61 | 100 | 72 | 106 | 87 |
| Total | 437 | 100 | -------- | 132 | 158 | 147 |
| Nonmembers who obtained jobs before leaving home by contact with— |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Farmer | 106 | 24 | 40 | 21 | 45 | 40 |
| Friend or relative | 26 | 6 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 9 |
| Factory agent | 23 | 5 | 9 | -------- | 15 | 8 |
| Employment service | 15 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 6 |
| Crew leader | 9 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Other | 2 | (2) | (2) | 1 | 1 | -------- |
| Total | 181 | 41 | 68 | 32 | 82 | 67 |
| Nonmembers who had no jobs before leaving: |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Expected to get work through— |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Having worked in area before | 34 | 8 | 13 | 19 | 7 | 8 |
| Friends or relatives | 32 | 7 | 12 | 13 | 11 | 8 |
| Rumors | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Employment service | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Crew leaders | 3 | (2) | 1 | 2 | 1 | -------- |
| Other | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 84 | 18 | 32 | 40 | 24 | 20 |
| Actually got work: |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| By contacting— |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Farmers | 35 | 8 | 13 | 16 | 9 | 10 |
| Friends | 22 | 5 | 8 | 12 | 6 | 4 |
| Previous contacts | 15 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 3 |
| Employment service | 6 | 1 | 2 | -------- | 4 | 2 |
| Factories or associations | 3 | (2) | 1 | -------- | 2 | 1 |
| Other | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | -------- |
| Total | 84 | 18 | 31 | 40 | 24 | 20 |

[1] 9 heads not classified according to crew status.

[2] Less than 1 percent.

TABLE 14.—*Transportation and financing of migratory farmworkers, by home-base city and range of movement, southern Texas, 1956* [1]

| Home-base city and range of movement | All households reporting | Households traveling in— |  |  |  | Households that received an advance |  | Average amount of advance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Own cars |  | Trucks |  |  |  |  |
|  | *Number* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Dollars* |
| All households | 220 | 89 | 40 | 129 | 59 | 49 | 22 | 68 |
| Home base: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Eagle Pass | 52 | 26 | 50 | 25 | 48 | 15 | 29 | 82 |
| Laredo | 40 | 20 | 50 | 19 | 48 | 13 | 32 | 81 |
| Weslaco | 65 | 21 | 32 | 43 | 66 | 10 | 15 | 60 |
| Robstown | 63 | 21 | 33 | 41 | 65 | 9 | 14 | 34 |
| Range of movement: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Intrastate | 69 | 22 | 31 | 47 | 68 | 7 | 10 | 18 |
| Interstate | 78 | 40 | 51 | 38 | 49 | 22 | 28 | 80 |
| Both | 73 | 29 | 40 | 44 | 60 | 20 | 27 | 69 |

[1] Data on these items were not obtained in San Antonio and Crystal City.

of car expenses and subsistence on the way. Workers who are transported by truck are less likely to be extended these advance payments; payments go instead to the crew leader or trucker.

Data on advances were not obtained from the workers in San Antonio and Crystal City; they were obtained from 220 households in the other home-base cities. Twenty-two percent of these households had received advances of some kind. Only 10 percent of the intrastate families had received advances, and they averaged $18 per household.

More than a fourth (28 percent) of the interstate households had received advances, and these averaged $80. Advances of this type are calculated on two bases: (1) Number of workers in the household; and (2) number of miles to the work area. Frequently, advances are $0.01 per worker per mile to be traveled, or around $17 per worker to Colorado. Ordinarily, if the worker remains until the end of the season, the advances need not be repaid. Employers in the work area say that workers observe their work commitments; they do not accept advances and then fail to appear (*42*).

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT DURING 1956

Migratory workers were asked to list all the places in which they had done any work the previous year. When the listing was made, they were requested to give the details of their employment at each place. All except a few were able to answer these questions with little difficulty, and an accurate record of employment and earnings for the year 1956 was obtained.

### Types of Work Performed

Farm jobs were reported eight times as often as nonfarm jobs. Among farm jobs, harvesting and similar seasonal operations were reported 17 times as often as any type of general farmwork. Numbers of workers performing the major types of farmwork are as follows:

| *Types of work* | *Number of workers* |
|---|---|
| Cotton, picking and pulling | 920 |
| Cotton, chopping | 118 |
| Sugar beets, thinning, hoeing, etc | 375 |
| Onions, planting and harvesting | 216 |
| Tomatoes, harvesting | 167 |
| Potatoes, harvesting | 136 |
| Spinach, harvesting | 102 |
| Other vegetable crops | 366 |
| Fruit crops, harvesting | 145 |
| Other crops | 111 |
| Other farmwork | 154 |

Nonfarm jobs covered an even wider range than farm jobs, but the major types can be classified as follows:

| *Types of work* | *Number of workers* |
|---|---|
| Cannery | 71 |
| Packinghouse | 41 |
| Other factory | 32 |
| Construction work | 50 |
| Service work | 39 |
| Other nonfarm work | 114 |

Approximately a third of the farm jobs mentioned were connected with cotton, and this crop is the major source of income for a large sector of the migrant group. Vegetable crops and sugar beets were next in importance. Among those engaged in other or general farmwork, 22 had been employed as truck or tractor drivers, but jobs at loading trucks and clearing land were more common.

Nonfarm jobs were reported six times as often at the home base as on the road. Relatively few workers migrated to work in canneries, packinghouses, and other sources of seasonal nonfarm employment.

### Employment at the Home Base

Employment in the home-base area is a matter of catch-as-catch-can for the migrants who winter there. These workers do not have the continuity of employment held by the year-round resident; they are likely to obtain only the more seasonal and temporary types of work. Many regard the winter as a rest period and look for employment only when their resources

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*Spanish-American workers picking cotton in the Arkansas delta. Competition from machines and imported labor is reducing the number of domestic workers in this area.*

are gone. As indicated previously, the winters from 1952 to 1956 were especially bad from an employment standpoint because a succession of droughts had reduced agricultural activity to a low point.

The foregoing may explain the poor employment record in the home-base cities. Less than half (45 percent) of the people who worked on the road did any work at the home base. Those who did work at the home base worked only a little more than half the time (table 15).

Home-base employment varied widely from city to city. Only a third of the migratory workers at San Antonio and Laredo did any work in winter. Those in San Antonio worked largely in nonfarm employment and were busy 62 percent of the time. The employment situation was relatively good in Crystal City, Eagle Pass, and Weslaco; the poorest employment was at Robstown. A greater number of winter farming operations are found in the first three areas.

TABLE 15.—*Employment of migratory farmworkers at their home bases, southern Texas, 1956*

| Home-base city | All migratory workers | Migratory workers who did some work at home base | | Average time at home base | | | Average percentage of workdays— | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Total work-days [1] | Days worked— | | | |
| | | | | | Per migratory worker | Per worker employed at home base | On which the employed worked | That were spent at farmwork |
| | *No.* | *No.* | *Pct.* | *Days* | *Days* | *Days* | *Pct.* | *Pct.* |
| San Antonio | 337 | 114 | 34 | 182 | 40 | 116 | 64 | 24 |
| Crystal City | 251 | 124 | 49 | 147 | 44 | 88 | 60 | 70 |
| Eagle Pass | 195 | 104 | 53 | 144 | 44 | 84 | 58 | 54 |
| Laredo | 132 | 45 | 34 | 159 | 30 | 88 | 55 | 46 |
| Weslaco | 214 | 118 | 55 | 159 | 54 | 98 | 62 | 49 |
| Robstown | 205 | 89 | 43 | 171 | 30 | 69 | 40 | 63 |
| Total | 1,334 | 594 | 45 | 162 | 41 | 92 | 57 | 49 |

[1] Figured at 5½ days per week and omitting 5 holidays.

## Employment on the Road

Utilization of the workers' time was greater on the trip away from the home base than at the home base. Workers were employed on 76 percent of the workdays—an average loss of only 28 days (table 16). The workers from Crystal City had an especially good record. They worked 86 percent of the workdays on the road and 60 percent of those at the home base. Workers at Robstown were at the low end of the scale, both on the road and at the home base. This is due partly to the fact that these workers were mainly cottonpickers; they did not shift to a variety of crops, as did many other workers.

## Employment During 1956

When the employment record for the year is compiled, it indicates an average of 131 days of work per person (table 17). Workers in Crystal City averaged 158 days and those in Robstown only 100. Those in Weslaco averaged 150 days and those in San Antonio 110.

These are rather broad averages, however, as more than half of the workers were out of the labor market for about 7 months of the year. Male heads of households averaged 174 days, nonschool male youth 141 days, and other male persons in the household 149 days. The average level of employment was reduced by the

TABLE 16.—*Employment of migratory farmworkers away from home base, southern Texas, 1956*

| Home-base city | All migratory workers | Average per worker | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Workdays on the road [1] | Days worked on the road | Percentage of workdays on which work was done |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Days* | *Percent* |
| San Antonio | 337 | 98 | 70 | 71 |
| Crystal City | 251 | 133 | 114 | 86 |
| Eagle Pass | 195 | 136 | 102 | 75 |
| Laredo | 132 | 121 | 90 | 74 |
| Weslaco | 214 | 121 | 96 | 79 |
| Robstown | 205 | 109 | 70 | 64 |
| Total | 1,334 | 118 | 90 | 76 |

[1] Figured at 5½ days per week and omitting 3 holidays.

TABLE 17.—*Average time worked and lost by migratory farmworkers, by family status and range of movement, southern Texas, 1956*

| Family status and range of movement | All workers reporting | Average time worked | Workdays on which no work done [1] | Workdays lost when available for work [2] | Percentage of workers who worked— | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 0 to 99 days | 100 to 199 days | 200 days and over |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Days* | *Days* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| All workers | 1,334 | 131 | 134 | 70 | 39 | 42 | 19 |
| Family status: | | | | | | | |
| Heads of households: | | | | | | | |
| Male | 410 | 174 | 97 | 89 | 15 | 48 | 37 |
| Female | 38 | 133 | 133 | 49 | 42 | 40 | 18 |
| Wives | 205 | 89 | 178 | 34 | 64 | 31 | 5 |
| Schoolchildren: | | | | | | | |
| Male | 157 | 81 | [3] 173 | 28 | 65 | 34 | 1 |
| Female | 124 | 84 | [3] 173 | 31 | 64 | 35 | 1 |
| Nonschoolchildren: | | | | | | | |
| Male | 107 | 141 | 113 | 92 | 33 | 45 | 22 |
| Female | 81 | 139 | 134 | 98 | 32 | 49 | 19 |
| Other persons: | | | | | | | |
| Male | 126 | 149 | 119 | 109 | 27 | 48 | 25 |
| Female | 86 | 134 | 131 | 89 | 37 | 42 | 21 |
| Range of movement: | | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 376 | 111 | 152 | 68 | 54 | 30 | 16 |
| Interstate | 464 | 138 | 125 | 70 | 35 | 42 | 23 |
| Both | 494 | 139 | 129 | 71 | 31 | 50 | 19 |

[1] Based on a year of 265 workdays. This does not include Sundays, holidays, half the Saturdays, and a 2-week vacation period.

[2] Days when workers were sick, were not interested in work, or were otherwise out of the labor market are not included.

[3] Includes days in school.

fact that schoolchildren averaged 82 days and wives 89.

One-third of the wives and schoolchildren worked for more than 100 days. Most of these children must have done some work during the period when school was in session.

Migrants who worked only within Texas had about 5 weeks less employment than those who migrated outside. It is this extra employment (usually at higher wage rates) that attracts the migrant worker to other States. When a family has a large number of workers, the extra employment and income may be very important in meeting expenses.

## Loss of Time

In calculating the number of days lost by the migratory farmworkers, a workyear of 265 days was used as the norm. A few workers were employed for more than 300 days, and 61 worked for more than 265 days. However, a 265-day year was selected as standard because it excluded 52 Sundays, 26 Saturdays, 11 holidays, and 11 vacation days. In some crops and areas, Saturday is not a workday; but in others, during the peak season, both Saturdays and Sundays may be workdays.

As previously indicated, the migratory workers were employed for an average of 131 days during 1956. Using 265 workdays as a norm, this means that on an average of 134 workdays they did no work. This broad figure overstates the actual number of days of unemployment. Ordinarily, housewives were out of the labor market while at the home base. Schoolchildren could not be counted as out of the labor market for the entire school year, as most of them attended school for only part of the session.

The figures for workdays on which no work was done are more meaningful when such days are classified according to status in the household. The number ranged from 97 days for male heads of households to more than 130 days for women other than wives. Many of the latter may have dropped out of the labor market, but there appears to be less reason for them than for the wives to do so.

**Reasons for Loss of Time.**—After the number of workdays lost was established for the individual worker, two questions were asked: (1) "Why were you not working on those

TABLE 18.—*Workdays lost by migratory farmworkers, by reason for not working, southern Texas, 1956*

| Reasons for loss of time | All workers reporting | Workdays lost— | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All | When available for work | |
| | | | All | Average per worker reporting |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Days* | *Days* |
| All time lost | [1] 1,273 | 178,931 | 92,722 | 73 |
| Reasons for lost time: | | | | |
| Personal: | | | | |
| Ill or unable to work | 19 | 2,064 | ---------- | ---------- |
| Resting, vacation | 16 | 636 | ---------- | ---------- |
| In school | 281 | 30,280 | 356 | 1 |
| Keeping house | 343 | 40,228 | 861 | 3 |
| Total | 659 | 73,208 | 1,217 | 2 |
| Other: | | | | |
| Bad weather | 59 | 1,440 | 1,440 | 24 |
| Crop conditions | 16 | 601 | 601 | 38 |
| No jobs available | 563 | 39,348 | 38,922 | 69 |
| Total | 795 | 44,644 | 42,644 | 54 |
| Total days lost, accounted for | ---------- | 117,852 | 43,861 | 35 |
| Total days lost, not accounted for | ---------- | 61,079 | 48,861 | 38 |

[1] 61 workers had no loss of time and are omitted from these averages. Figures in this column are not additive, because individual workers may have lost time for more than 1 reason.

days?" and (2) "How many of the days when you did not work were due to each of these reasons?" An abbreviated list of the reasons given appears in table 18.

The validity of the answers was lowered by the fact that the Spanish-American workers were not accustomed to accounting for all their time. They worked hard during the summer when there was a great deal of work to be done, but their custom was to relax when the work season was over. Even though their primary need was to make a living, if they had not earned enough from the summer's work to last for any length of time, the winter was still the customary time for relaxation.

This attitude must be balanced against the actual scarcity of jobs in southern Texas during the winters of 1955 and 1956. It may be too much to expect a worker to decide which of these two sets of circumstances was more important in accounting for his lack of work during the winter. Consequently, a major element in the table concerns days not accounted for. These days are shared by the head of the household, his sons and daughters who are out of school, and other members of the household except the housewife and the schoolchildren. The latter have an adequate reason for dropping out of the labor market.

The reasons given for losing time were classified roughly into two groups—personal reasons, such as illness, resting, and vacation; and external reasons, such as bad weather or no jobs available. Keeping house and going to school were included in the former group, but they actually lie between the two classifications.

In practice, it was found that loss of time was sometimes associated not with one reason alone but with a complex of reasons. The complexes were handled in such a way as to permit identification of the days lost by workers when they were actually available for work. For example, a worker who could not find employment became sick and was unable to work. Instead of reporting him as losing 90 days because no jobs were available, he was counted as losing 70 days for this reason and 20 because of illness.

Actually, workers were inclined to overlook brief sicknesses as a reason for not working and to include only major disabilities, injuries, and the like. Only 19 workers reported loss of time because of sickness; these workers lost an average of 109 days each. Workers generally did not report taking time off to rest or for a vacation. Only 16 reported doing this, and their time off amounted to 40 days per person. More detailed questioning might have brought a higher rate of response concerning these two reasons for loss of time.

The major reasons given for not working were going to school, keeping house, and no work available. The schoolchildren reported an average of 108 days lost because of attendance at school. This may provide a rough measurement of the average amount of time they were in school during the year.

In the process of tabulation, it was discovered that keeping house was overworked as a reason for nonemployment. A mother with three daughters would report that all four were keeping house; and if her mother or sister were in the household, she, too, was labeled as a housekeeper. It is a Spanish-American custom that such people assist with the housework and with rearing the family, and more frequently than the mother they work in the fields during the harvest season (*31*). It occurs only to the most profit-oriented among them to break these customs and take a job to earn a living.

Consequently, in the analysis, the number of housekeepers was arbitrarily limited to one per household of less than six members and to two for households of six or more members. The days lost by the other women were counted as "Total days lost, not accounted for." These people were usually reported as available for work.

Wives and other persons who did nothing besides keep house during the year were not counted as workers, even though they may have migrated to several States. But some wives migrated to other States and did no fieldwork until they returned to the cotton fields of Texas. In these instances, a few days or weeks of work in cotton or other crops caused them to be classified as migratory workers.

The figure showing number of days lost because no work was available must be regarded as a broad rather than a firm estimate. Workers did not report on exactly the same basis. Had the question been asked in regard to the time during which they believed no work was available, most of the unaccounted-for days would have been tabulated under this category.

**Days Lost When Workers Available.**—During 1956, the workers lost an average of 70 days of worktime when they were available for work. Male heads of households were available on 89 of the 97 days on which they did not work; thus they were employed on only two-thirds of the days on which they were available for work. Wives were in the labor market for about 123 days, but during that time they lost 34 days on which they were available for employment, or 29 percent of their time. School youth were in a similar situation; these young people lost about a fourth of the days on which they were available for employment.

The nonschool youth and the "other persons" in the household had the lowest rate of utilization. Persons in these groups were available for around 100 more days of employment during the year than they actually obtained. This means that their services were utilized on approximately 62 percent of their available time.

Workers who migrated only within Texas lost more time (around 25 days more) than those who worked in other States. This difference is reversed, however, when availability for work is brought into the analysis. The intrastate workers had worked fewer days but reported themselves as available for a shorter time. This is probably due to the fact that they expect a shorter work season and expect to be out of the labor market until that season arrives. It does not negate the fact that utilization of their time is exceptionally low. It leads also to the conclusion that some workers may have been conservative in stating their availability; hence, utilization of their actual worktime might be even less than the data indicate.

These differences point also to the fact that a shift is being made from the original Spanish-American work pattern to the Anglo-American pattern. Some workers still think in terms of working only during the busy season of the year; others have begun to think in terms of working regularly.

Two-thirds of the days lost on which the migrants were available for work—an average of 46 of the 70 days reported—were lost at the home base. By specific home-base areas, the average number of available days lost ran as follows:

| *Home base* | *Number of days lost* |
|---|---|
| San Antonio | 43 |
| Crystal City | 35 |
| Eagle Pass | 46 |
| Laredo | 49 |
| Weslaco | 40 |
| Robstown | 73 |

Outside the home-base areas, the loss in time when the migrants were available for work was comparatively low; ordinarily, it was spread over several States. The average number of days lost when migrants were available for work, by major employing States, were as follows:

| *State* | *Number of days lost* |
|---|---|
| Texas (outside home base) | 12 |
| Oklahoma | 4 |
| Minnesota | 7 |
| Michigan | 8 |
| Wisconsin | 5 |
| Ohio | 8 |
| Indiana | 2 |
| Illinois | 7 |
| North Dakota | 6 |
| Colorado | 9 |
| Idaho | 10 |
| Washington | 6 |
| California | 15 |
| Arizona | 2 |

## EARNINGS DURING 1956

When the earnings of the workers in the sample group are added together for the 1956 season, they amount to $1,039,791, or an average of $779 per worker (table 19). The average earnings per day worked amount to $5.95. Male heads did considerably better than this. They averaged $1,145 during the year, or $6.58 per day worked. School youth and wives tended to bring down the average earnings. The youth added approximately $400 to the earnings of the household, while wives added a little more than $500.

Median incomes in the United States in 1956 were as follows: All workers, $2,432; residents of urban areas, $2,786; and people living on farms, $1,029 (*34*). Male heads of all households had a median income of $3,608; those living on farms had $1,340. Wives earned a median income of $1,117. Incomes of other workers in the household were correspondingly higher than those of members of migrant families.

When the workers are classified as to their range of movement, interstate workers aver-

TABLE 19.—*Average earnings of migratory farmworkers, by family status and range of movement, southern Texas, 1956*

| Family status and range of movement | All workers reporting | Average earnings— | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | For year | Per day worked |
| | *Number* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* |
| All workers | 1,334 | 779 | 5.95 |
| Family status: | | | |
| Heads of households: | | | |
| Male | 410 | 1,145 | 6.58 |
| Female | 38 | 640 | 4.81 |
| Wives | 205 | 528 | 5.93 |
| Schoolchildren: | | | |
| Male | 157 | 421 | 5.20 |
| Female | 124 | 387 | 4.61 |
| Nonschoolchildren: | | | |
| Male | 107 | 887 | 6.29 |
| Female | 81 | 703 | 5.06 |
| Other persons: | | | |
| Male | 126 | 872 | 5.85 |
| Female | 86 | 750 | 5.60 |
| Range of movement: | | | |
| Intrastate | 376 | 573 | 5.16 |
| Interstate | 464 | 907 | 6.57 |
| Both | 494 | 821 | 5.91 |

aged the highest earnings for the year, $907. Intrastate workers averaged $573, and those who moved both within and outside the State averaged $821. No attempt was made to calculate the relative costs of interstate and in-State movement; but, apparently, out-of-State movement pays the migratory worker. Average earnings per day for those who worked only within the State were $5.16, while for those working outside the State they amounted to $6.57.

A comparison of average earnings per day indicates that workers in the Far West—Arizona, California, and Washington—averaged the highest pay and those in Texas and Colorado the lowest (table 20). More than half of the earnings during 1956 were made outside Texas, and this despite the fact that more than half the days worked were within the State.

TABLE 20.—*Earnings of migratory farmworkers from southern Texas by major States in which money was earned, 1956*

| State | Total earnings | Total time worked | Average earnings per day |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Dollars* | *Days* | *Dollars* |
| Texas | 489,668 | 95,339 | 5.14 |
| Michigan | 83,078 | 12,512 | 6.64 |
| Colorado | 39,479 | 7,383 | 5.35 |
| Minnesota | 80,285 | 10,938 | 7.34 |
| Wisconsin | 65,092 | 9,085 | 7.16 |
| Washington | 35,267 | 4,204 | 8.39 |
| Ohio | 26,597 | 3,887 | 6.84 |
| California | 27,240 | 3,083 | 8.84 |
| Arizona | 23,312 | 2.178 | 10.70 |
| Idaho | 31,934 | 5,150 | 6.20 |
| Illinois | 26,754 | 3.369 | 7.94 |
| North Dakota | 21,932 | 2,831 | 7.75 |
| Other States [1] | 89,153 | 15,466 | 5.76 |
| All States | 1,039,791 | 175.425 | 5.93 |

[1] Includes some work in Mexico.

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*Spanish-American workers have traditionally done most of the fieldwork in sugar beets. Today, most of the topping and loading of sugar beets is done by machine.*

TABLE 21.—*Migratory farmworkers who had earnings of stated amounts, by family status and range of movement, southern Texas, 1956*

| Family status and range of movement | All workers reporting | Income group | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Under $500 | | $500 to 999 | | $1,000 to 1,999 | | $2,000 and over | |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* |
| All workers | 1,334 | 474 | 36 | 483 | 36 | 338 | 25 | 39 | 3 |
| Family status: | | | | | | | | | |
| Heads of household: | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 410 | 44 | 11 | 152 | 37 | 182 | 44 | 32 | 8 |
| Female | 38 | 18 | 47 | 11 | 29 | 9 | 24 | ------- | ------- |
| Wives | 205 | 113 | 55 | 68 | 33 | 22 | 11 | 2 | 1 |
| Schoolchildren: | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 157 | 99 | 63 | 52 | 33 | 6 | 4 | ------- | ------- |
| Female | 124 | 91 | 74 | 29 | 23 | 4 | 3 | ------- | ------- |
| Nonschoolchildren: | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 107 | 21 | 19 | 49 | 46 | 35 | 33 | 2 | 2 |
| Female | 81 | 27 | 33 | 36 | 44 | 16 | 20 | 2 | 3 |
| Other persons: | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 126 | 30 | 24 | 52 | 41 | 43 | 34 | 1 | 1 |
| Female | 86 | 31 | 36 | 34 | 40 | 21 | 24 | ------- | ------- |
| Range of movement was— | | | | | | | | | |
| Intrastate only | 376 | 214 | 57 | 93 | 25 | 63 | 17 | 6 | 1 |
| Interstate only | 464 | 123 | 27 | 169 | 36 | 154 | 33 | 18 | 4 |
| Both | 494 | 137 | 28 | 221 | 45 | 121 | 24 | 15 | 3 |

## Range

Actually, earnings of workers in the migrant group varied widely. Among male heads of households, 1 in 12 earned more than $2,000 during the year, 1 in 10 earned less than $500, and almost half earned less than $1,000 (table 21). Only two wives earned as much as $2,000; most of them had earnings of less than $500. A few school youth earned $1,000 or more, but most of them earned less than $500.

More than half of the intrastate migrants earned less than $500 as compared with a little less than a fourth of those who worked outside the State. Six persons who worked only within the State made as much as $2,000. Of those who worked both outside the State and in the Texas cotton harvest, 33 exceeded the $2,000 mark.

TABLE 22.—*Average earnings of migratory households, by range of movement, crew status, and number of workers, southern Texas, 1956*

| Type of household | All households reporting | Average earnings per household |
|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Dollars* |
| All households | 446 | 2,208 |
| Range of movement: | | |
| Intrastate | 135 | 1,496 |
| Interstate | 161 | 2,465 |
| Both | 150 | 2,583 |
| Crew membership: | | |
| Crew | 172 | 2,026 |
| Noncrew | 273 | 2,507 |
| Workers per household: | | |
| 1 | 99 | 1,218 |
| 2 | 110 | 1,732 |
| 3 | 88 | 2,537 |
| 4 | 79 | 2,929 |
| 5 | 43 | 3,073 |
| 6 | 22 | 3,954 |
| 7 | 4 | 4,287 |
| 8 | 1 | 4,184 |

## Per Household

As most of these workers were employed as members of family groups, data on household earnings may be more useful than those per individual worker. Earnings of the families in 1956 averaged $2,208 (table 22). Intrastate families, however, averaged about $1,000 less than those who worked outside the State: $1,496 compared with $2,465 for interstate families, and $2,583 for those who migrated both within and outside the State.

The utility of large families is attested to in the data on earnings per household according to number of workers. One-worker families had total earnings of only $1,218; a second worker added $514 to the family total; and a third boosted the family income to $2,537. Families

TABLE 23.—*Earnings of migratory farmworkers at the home base, southern Texas, 1956*

| Home-base city | All workers reporting | Average earnings at home base— | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Per worker | | Per day worked— | |
| | | All workers | Who worked at home base | At nonfarm jobs | At farm jobs |
| | *Number* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* |
| San Antonio | 114 | 228 | 664 | 6.07 | 4.69 |
| Crystal City | 124 | 258 | 521 | 6.99 | 5.48 |
| Eagle Pass | 104 | 164 | 312 | 3.20 | 4.11 |
| Laredo | 45 | 99 | 294 | 2.73 | 4.02 |
| Weslaco | 118 | 253 | 460 | 4.33 | 5.01 |
| Robstown | 89 | 189 | 436 | 6.84 | 5.40 |
| All cities | 594 | 209 | 470 | 5.21 | 4.94 |

with six, seven, or eight workers had average total earnings of around $4,000 or better. Data on the cost of maintenance of these children are not available, but it is evident that a large number of workers in a family results in a real addition to family purchasing power.

A rough comparison between the incomes of these households and those of all households in the United States is possible. The median income of all households was more than twice that of the South Texas migrant households, $4,783 as compared with $2,256 (*34*). Rural farm households, however, had median incomes in 1956 of only $2,371. It may be seen that many low-income families in the Nation are in the same income bracket as the migrant workers; many cropper families average less, but they do not have the cost of migrating. Nonwhite farm families averaged $1,104 in 1956; they, also, had no migrating expenses.

The average Spanish-American household contained 6.5 persons as compared with an average of 3.3 persons for the Nation as a whole. Families in the United States with two workers had a median income of $5,576 in 1956, and those with three or more had $6,946.

## At the Home Base

One of the major reasons for low earnings in their home State was the fact that, when at home, more than half the workers were out of the labor force. This included practically all the housewives and schoolchildren and a high percentage of the other persons in the households.[8] Average home-base earnings of those who did work were $470.

Earnings in the home-base cities varied to a large extent with distance from the Mexican border (table 23). This was especially true for nonfarm jobs. Nonfarm workers in Crystal City and Robstown earned close to $7 a day, while those in Eagle Pass averaged $3.20 and those in Laredo $2.73. Workers are likely to come from either side of the international boundary, and this results in a wage scale that at best is adjusted partly to living costs in Mexico.

## In Texas

The wide range in earnings per day in Texas points to the steady climb up the economic ladder of Spanish-American workers. Those who worked in carrots and other vegetables earned around $3.50 to $4.00 per day (table 24). Work in cotton is a step above "stoop" labor and is better paid at around $5.50 per day. Those who were able to drive trucks or tractors received an average of $6.71.

The strong movement toward nonfarm employment was associated with the fact that nonfarm jobs provided twice as much employment at a 50-percent higher wage. Again, unskilled

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[8] Some statistical bias may have occurred in the results of this survey because of the fact that families with no financial reserves had gone to work areas such as the Rio Grande Valley or Florida, or to Mexico, where expenses were less.

TABLE 24.—*Days worked and amounts earned in Texas by migratory farmworkers from southern Texas, by type of work, 1956*

| Type of work | All workers reporting [1] | Average days worked | Average earnings— | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Per worker | Per worker per day |
| Farmwork: | *Number* | *Days* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* |
| Cotton: | | | | |
| Chopping | 104 | 44 | 243 | 5.52 |
| Picking | 721 | 46 | 247 | 5.37 |
| Onions | 126 | 58 | 222 | 3.83 |
| Spinach | 102 | 58 | 260 | 4.48 |
| Carrots | 37 | 78 | 259 | 3.32 |
| Other vegetables | 91 | 57 | 199 | 3.49 |
| Other crops | 21 | 65 | 282 | 4.34 |
| Truck or tractor driver, farm | 19 | 84 | 564 | 6.71 |
| Other | 103 | 73 | 311 | 4.26 |
| Nonfarmwork: | | | | |
| Construction work | 50 | 84 | 682 | 8.12 |
| Service work | 37 | 79 | 319 | 4.04 |
| Cannery | 35 | 70 | 488 | 6.97 |
| Packinghouse | 34 | 83 | 490 | 5.90 |
| Ice or storage plant | 7 | 84 | 376 | 4.48 |
| Sawmill | 7 | 29 | 135 | 4.66 |
| Other factory work | 12 | 71 | 633 | 8.92 |
| Professional services | 5 | 62 | 336 | 5.42 |
| Transportation | 11 | 85 | 452 | 5.32 |
| Other | 97 | 90 | 564 | 6.27 |

[1] Figures are not additive, as some workers did more than one type of work.

jobs in restaurants, hotels, and so on, paid low wages, around $4.00 a day; but workers accepted them when they were unable to do better. Lifting and loading jobs at storage plants and sawmills paid only a little better, but most factory and construction work paid more than $8.00 a day.

## Outside Texas

Jobs outside Texas generally paid better than those in the State. A few jobs, such as cotton chopping in Missouri and potato picking in Alabama, paid no better than the stoop labor jobs in Texas (table 25). But most earnings at farmwork were in the neighborhood of $6, $7, or $8 per day. In nonfarm work, the same job gradations occurred as in Texas, but the rates of pay were from 20 to 50 percent higher (table 26). Apparently, southern Texas is both a starting point and a training ground; workers who are ambitious to obtain a higher return for their efforts ultimately go elsewhere.

The rate of earnings reported by the workers corresponds with the relative differences in wage payments between one part of the country and another. Then, too, migratory workers tend to seek the areas with the higher wage levels. Wages were comparatively low in the Southeastern States, and relatively few of the southern Texas migrants went there to compete with Negroes for employment. Wages were higher in the North, and particularly in the Northwest, and it is in these directions that the Spanish-Americans are moving.

Length of employment, earnings, and crops were so small in some areas as not to justify a trip there; this was true, for example, of Alabama potatoes and Missouri and Mississippi cotton. Some workers, however, earned $600 to $800 in the course of a few months, particularly in the Northwestern States.

AA A-8186W

*Carrot topping in Arizona is a winter activity which attracts migratory workers away from southern Texas permanently.*

BN-8877X

*Planting onions in southern Texas. This activity precedes movement to other parts of the Nation. (Photograph courtesy of Dallas Morning News.)*

*Harvesting lettuce in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. The entire harvesting operation is now carried on in the field.*

TABLE 25.—*Time worked on farms and amounts earned outside Texas by migratory farmworkers from southern Texas, by State and type of work, 1956*

| State and type of work | All workers reporting [1] | Average time worked | Average earnings— | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Per worker | Per worker per day |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* |
| Alabama: | | | | |
| Potatoes | 8 | 20 | 71 | 3.55 |
| Arizona: | | | | |
| Cotton: | | | | |
| Chopping | 2 | 73 | 666 | 9.12 |
| Picking | 60 | 34 | 366 | 10.76 |
| Arkansas: | | | | |
| Cotton, picking | 18 | 35 | 235 | 6.71 |
| Truck driver, farm | 1 | 13 | 100 | 7.69 |
| California: | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 6 | 69 | 600 | 8.70 |
| Vegetable crops | 10 | 60 | 522 | 8.70 |
| Fruit crops | 16 | 88 | 623 | 7.08 |
| General farmwork | 1 | 136 | 1,700 | 12.50 |
| Colorado: | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 77 | 74 | 375 | 5.07 |
| Potatoes | 13 | 72 | 519 | 7.21 |
| Beans | 18 | 28 | 131 | 4.68 |
| Other vegetables | 9 | 30 | 167 | 5.57 |
| Delaware: | | | | |
| Vegetables | 3 | 47 | 340 | 7.23 |
| Florida: | | | | |
| Tomatoes | 9 | 63 | 392 | 6.22 |
| Other vegetables | 5 | 167 | 752 | 4.50 |

See footnote at end of table.

TABLE 25.—*Time worked on farms and amounts earned outside Texas by migratory farmworkers from southern Texas, by State and type of work, 1956*—Continued

| State and type of work | All workers reporting[1] | Average time worked | Average earnings— | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Per worker | Per worker per day |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* |
| **Idaho:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 45 | 49 | 299 | 6.10 |
| Potatoes | 53 | 34 | 248 | 7.29 |
| Onions | 14 | 68 | 276 | 4.06 |
| Other crops | 18 | 10 | 80 | 8.00 |
| **Illinois:** | | | | |
| Tomatoes | 27 | 39 | 319 | 8.18 |
| Onions | 7 | 84 | 473 | 5.63 |
| Other vegetables | 18 | 58 | 433 | 7.47 |
| Other farmwork | 3 | 103 | 1,013 | 9.83 |
| **Indiana:** | | | | |
| Tomatoes | 42 | 38 | 232 | 6.11 |
| Other crops | 5 | 35 | 231 | 6.60 |
| General farmwork | 4 | 16 | 100 | 6.25 |
| **Iowa:** | | | | |
| Potatoes | 6 | 28 | 164 | 5.86 |
| Other farmwork | 8 | 78 | 305 | 3.91 |
| **Kansas:** | | | | |
| All crops | 9 | 35 | 352 | 10.06 |
| **Michigan:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 68 | 53 | 342 | 6.45 |
| Tomatoes | 25 | 43 | 342 | 7.95 |
| Onions | 23 | 82 | 478 | 5.83 |
| Strawberries | 19 | 24 | 194 | 8.08 |
| Cucumbers | 37 | 37 | 178 | 4.81 |
| Asparagus | 7 | 30 | 150 | 5.00 |
| Other vegetables | 17 | 64 | 449 | 7.02 |
| Cherries | 85 | 29 | 210 | 7.24 |
| Other fruit | 6 | 15 | 115 | 7.67 |
| **Minnesota:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 123 | 55 | 424 | 7.71 |
| Potatoes | 11 | 49 | 235 | 4.80 |
| Beans | 8 | 74 | 502 | 6.78 |
| Onions | 25 | 86 | 588 | 6.84 |
| Other vegetables | 7 | 33 | 259 | 7.85 |
| Corn | 12 | 22 | 148 | 6.73 |
| General farmwork | 4 | 70 | 522 | 7.46 |
| **Mississippi:** | | | | |
| Cotton, picking | 3 | 10 | 50 | 5.00 |
| **Missouri:** | | | | |
| Cotton: | | | | |
| Chopping | 7 | 11 | 36 | 3.27 |
| Picking | 41 | 21 | 130 | 6.19 |
| **Montana:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 35 | 54 | 299 | 5.54 |
| **Nebraska:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets and other crops | 19 | 43 | 275 | 6.40 |
| **New Mexico:** | | | | |
| Cotton, picking | 27 | 23 | 178 | 7.74 |
| Other farmwork | 5 | 39 | 161 | 4.13 |
| **North Dakota:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 42 | 48 | 356 | 7.42 |
| Potatoes | 26 | 32 | 269 | 8.41 |
| **Ohio:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 10 | 92 | 530 | 5.76 |
| Potatoes | 9 | 37 | 301 | 8.14 |
| Tomatoes | 51 | 38 | 270 | 7.11 |
| Other crops | 12 | 32 | 174 | 5.44 |
| **Oklahoma:** | | | | |
| Cotton, picking | 50 | 33 | 190 | 5.76 |
| **Oregon:** | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 11 | 50 | 268 | 5.36 |
| Onions | 6 | 97 | 860 | 8.87 |
| Other vegetables | 5 | 57 | 623 | 10.93 |
| Hops | 9 | 46 | 421 | 9.15 |

See footnote at end of table.

### TABLE 25.—*Time worked on farms and amounts earned outside Texas by migratory farmworkers from southern Texas, by State and type of work, 1956*—Continued

| State and type of work | All workers reporting[1] | Average time worked | Average earnings— | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Per worker | Per worker per day |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* |
| South Dakota: | | | | |
| Potatoes | 2 | 30 | 210 | 7.00 |
| Utah: | | | | |
| Tomatoes | 7 | 17 | 112 | 6.59 |
| Other crops | 9 | 42 | 305 | 7.26 |
| Washington: | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 23 | 74 | 692 | 9.35 |
| Peas | 5 | 78 | 658 | 8.44 |
| Asparagus | 6 | 58 | 409 | 7.05 |
| Other vegetables | 3 | 65 | 588 | 9.05 |
| Apples | 2 | 18 | 180 | 10.00 |
| Hops | 9 | 112 | 781 | 6.97 |
| General farmwork | 4 | 137 | 1,580 | 11.53 |
| Wisconsin: | | | | |
| Sugar beets | 16 | 64 | 461 | 7.20 |
| Potatoes | 8 | 33 | 188 | 5.70 |
| Tomatoes | 6 | 107 | 525 | 4.91 |
| Beans | 8 | 23 | 123 | 5.35 |
| Onions | 15 | 73 | 528 | 7.23 |
| Cucumbers | 43 | 21 | 123 | 5.86 |
| Other vegetables | 28 | 88 | 701 | 7.97 |
| Apples | 9 | 25 | 175 | 7.00 |
| Cherries | 33 | 26 | 161 | 6.19 |
| Corn | 7 | 82 | 698 | 8.51 |

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[1] Figures are not additive, as some workers did more than 1 type of work or worked in more than 1 State.

### TABLE 26.—*Time worked at nonfarm employment and amounts earned outside Texas by migratory farmworkers from southern Texas, by State and type of work, 1956*

| State and type of work | All workers reporting[1] | Average time worked | Average earnings— | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Per worker | Per worker per day |
| | *Number* | *Days* | *Dollars* | *Dollars* |
| California: | | | | |
| Cannery | 5 | 105 | 1,348.40 | 12.84 |
| Illinois: | | | | |
| Packinghouse | 1 | 200 | 2,600.00 | 13.00 |
| Other factory | 2 | 82 | 692.00 | 8.44 |
| Indiana: | | | | |
| Packinghouse | 4 | 49 | 288.00 | 5.88 |
| Michigan: | | | | |
| Packinghouse | 1 | 85 | 650.00 | 7.65 |
| Cannery | 2 | 72 | 500.00 | 6.94 |
| Railroad | 1 | 96 | 1,152.00 | 12.00 |
| Minnesota: | | | | |
| Cannery | 3 | 17 | 117.00 | 6.88 |
| Other factory work | 2 | 12 | 150.00 | 12.50 |
| Oregon: | | | | |
| Cannery | 1 | 70 | 840.00 | 12.00 |
| Utah: | | | | |
| Cannery | 1 | 63 | 500.00 | 7.94 |
| Washington: | | | | |
| Cannery | 5 | 34 | 256.00 | 7.53 |
| Housework | 1 | 134 | 854.00 | 6.37 |
| Other service | 1 | 100 | 482.00 | 4.82 |
| Wisconsin: | | | | |
| Packinghouse | 1 | 124 | 1,356.00 | 10.94 |
| Cannery | 19 | 39 | 322.00 | 8.26 |
| Other factory work | 2 | 80 | 578.00 | 7.22 |

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[1] Figures are not additive, as the same worker may have done more than 1 type of work or worked in more than 1 State.

## RATES OF PAY

Each worker reported the rate of pay for each job on which he had worked during the previous year, but a detailed tabulation of these rates proved to be of little use. On the one hand, the size of boxes, baskets, buckets, or other containers used as a basis of payment for a particular operation varied from area to area. On the other hand, the method of performing an operation varied from area to area and from farm to farm. Finally, the worker's terminology was too loose to account for all differences.

The most complicated of these job situations involved the "thinning" of sugar beets. Some workers reporeed $10, $12, and $14 an acre for thinning sugar beets. From these amounts, the rate per acre ranged up to $22 and $23. The rate varied with the number and type of thinning and hoeing operations performed. Some had finger-thinned the beets after crossblocking had been done by machine. Other workers did both blocking and thinning. Others did the hand thinning, plus one, two, or more hand hoeings, all of which were a part of the thinning agreement. Hence, what might appear as a difference in rates from one sugar-beet area to another turns out to be a difference in the type of operation performed.

Consequently, variations in earnings per day as set forth in the previous section are the best guide to differences in rates of pay. Wage rates are described here in general terms rather than in detail. Exceptions are rates for chopping, pulling, and picking cotton. These operations are pretty well standardized, yet local rates for picking are greatly affected by yield per acre; so even here it is hazardous to compare areas without knowing all the factors involved.

Most jobs performed by the migratory workers were paid for on a piece-rate basis. The workers reported a total of 5,989 jobs worked at during the year, and 4 in 5 of them were paid for on a piece-rate basis. The major exceptions were as follows: (1) Nonfarm jobs both at the home base and on the road; (2) cotton chopping; and (3) general farmwork, including the loading and hauling of harvested crops.

Most jobs paid for on an hourly or daily basis, therefore, were located at the home base. Rates of pay for these jobs varied widely. Many service-type jobs brought as little as $2 a day, and construction work yielded from $0.75 to $2 an hour. The most frequent rate for chopping cotton was $0.50 or $0.60 an hour (table 27).

The wide range in time rates indicates the wide range in abilities and adaptation of these people. A migrant who had come from Mexico recently might regard $0.40 an hour or $1.50 a day as adequate wages. But to receive $2 an hour on a construction job, workers would need to have some special skill.

TABLE 27.—*Wage rates reported for chopping cotton by migratory farmworkers from southern Texas, by States, 1956*

| Wage rate | Workers reporting work done in— | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | All States | Texas | Other States [1] |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Per hour: | | | |
| $0.40 | 5 | 5 | -------- |
| .50 | 40 | 37 | 3 |
| .55 | 11 | 11 | -------- |
| .60 | 40 | 38 | 2 |
| .65 | 5 | 5 | -------- |
| .75 | 4 | 4 | -------- |
| Per day: | | | |
| $4.00 | 18 | 17 | 1 |
| 4.50 | 2 | 2 | -------- |
| 5.00 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| 5.50 | 9 | 9 | -------- |
| 6.75 | 7 | 7 | -------- |
| 9.00 | 1 | -------- | 1 |
| Per week: | | | |
| $25.00 | 2 | 2 | -------- |
| All rates | 150 | 141 | 9 |

[1] Arizona, Arkansas, and Missouri.

Leaving out sugar-beet and cotton operations, the rates most commonly reported were as follows:

Potatoes

| | |
|---|---|
| Colorado | 6 cents per half sack; 12 to 14 cents per full sack; 12 to 15 cents per hundredweight |
| Idaho | 9 cents per sack; 15 cents per hundredweight; 20 to 25 cents per hundredweight pick, load, and haul |
| Minnesota | 65 to 75 cents per hour; 5 to 8 cents per bushel |
| North Dakota | 8 to 10 cents per bushel; 10 cents per sack |
| Nebraska | 7 to 9 cents per bushel; 12 to 16 cents per bushel pick, load, and haul |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Onions |
| Colorado | 14 cents per full sack |
| Minnesota | 10 cents per bushel; 70 to 75 cents per hour |
| Wisconsin | 75 cents per hour |
| Michigan | 75 cents per hour |
| | Tomatoes |
| Colorado | 12 cents per box |
| Indiana | 10 cents per basket |
| Ohio | 11 cents per hamper |
| | Beans |
| Colorado | $2 per hundredweight |
| Idaho | 2¼ cents per pound |
| Minnesota | 3 cents per pound; 60 cents per bushel |
| | Cherries |
| Michigan | 50 to 60 cents per box; 2 cents per pound |
| Wisconsin | 20 cents per basket |

Compared with these rates, those in nonfarm employment were a model of uniformity. The most common rate for work in canneries and packinghouses in all areas was $1 per hour, and most construction work brought either $0.75 or $1 an hour. Rates of pay on service jobs ranged from $10 to $40 a week and from $0.15 to $1 per hour. Jobs in restaurants, hotels, laundries, and other service establishments attract many new entrants from Mexico. The jobs serve as a method of getting acquainted here and as a steppingstone toward higher paid employment in other fields.

Wage rates for pulling and picking cotton are shown in detail (table 28). Pulling rates started at $1 per 100 pounds of seed cotton and went as high as $1.75. Three-fourths of the reports, however, were for $1.50. Picking rates started at $2, the most common rate, but some workers received as much as $4. Rates varied considerably from one cotton area to another. Rates in Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico were on the same general levels, while those in Arizona, Arkansas, and Missouri were considerably higher.

TABLE 28.—*Wage rates reported for picking and pulling cotton by migratory farmworkers from southern Texas, by States, 1956*

| Rate per hundredweight | Workers reporting work done in— | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All States | Tex. | Okla. | N. Mex. | Ariz. | Ark. | Mo. | Other |
| Pulling cotton: | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| $1.00 | 5 | 5 | | | | | | |
| 1.25 | 64 | 60 | 2 | 2 | | | | |
| 1.40 | 15 | 15 | | | | | | |
| 1.50 | 867 | 792 | 33 | 15 | 6 | | | 21 |
| 1.55 | 5 | 5 | | | | | | |
| 1.60 | 15 | 14 | 1 | | | | | |
| 1.65 | 36 | 36 | | | | | | |
| 1.75 | 183 | 163 | 17 | 3 | | | | |
| All rates | 1,190 | 1,090 | 53 | 20 | 6 | | | 21 |
| Picking cotton: | | | | | | | | |
| $2.00 | 112 | 92 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 5 | | 3 |
| 2.10 | 8 | 8 | | | | | | |
| 2.25 | 29 | 21 | | | 8 | | | |
| 2.50 | 19 | 7 | | 3 | 8 | 1 | | |
| 2.75 | 6 | | | | 5 | 1 | | |
| 3.00 | 60 | 7 | | | 17 | 8 | 28 | |
| 3.20 | 7 | | | | | | 7 | |
| 3.50 | 9 | | | | | 3 | 6 | |
| 4.00 | 3 | | | | 3 | | | |
| All rates | 253 | 135 | 1 | 8 | 47 | 18 | 41 | 3 |

## THE CREW LEADER SYSTEM

The term "crew" has many different meanings in the midcontinent area. Both the crew system and the terminology that accompanies it are flexible enough to meet the varied needs of many different types of crops and employers. The employer often refers to a group of people working together on a job as his crew. He ignores the internal organization of the work group unless trouble arises that calls for determination of responsibility. Workers, however, regard the group as a crew only when the individuals look to one person as their leader or spokesman. Migratory workers apply the term to a group of workers recruited by a crew leader who provides or supervises their transportation, makes their job and housing arrangements, and keeps a watchful eye on their other activities while they are members of his crew. This is the concept used in this report. It distinguishes crews from family groups and from individual workers who travel together without an agreed-upon form of organization.

In actual practice, the dividing line between crews, families, and unorganized groups shifts with circumstances. When the head of a household bargains with an employer, he likes to speak of his crew. But when regulations for crew leaders are involved, he is merely the head of a family. The term "family" can also be stretched indefinitely.

In southern Texas, workers are commonly recruited by a person who has made or will make job arrangements with employers in the seasonal work areas. He may be recruiting for a local representative of a sugar-beet or canning company that will advance transportation costs, or he may be recruiting on his own. He regards the workers as his crew unless he is merely transporting them as a trucker for the company. Often when the workers are taken to a sugar-beet area, they are broken into family groups and assigned to individual farms. The sugar-beet farmer is likely to call the workers his thinning crew, but the beet company refers to them more correctly as families.

When the sugar-beet season is over, the crew leader ordinarily reassembles the family groups. If he takes them to a canning area, they may become part of a larger group which the cannery refers to as its "field crew," its "bean crew," and so on. The original group may again reassemble at the end of the canning season to go to the cotton area in Texas, where it works as a unit on individual cotton farms. In this area, the work group and the crew tend to be identical.[9]

Crew leaders arise from the need of inarticulate people to have someone speak for them. An individual who has some facility with the English language, therefore, may find that the position of crew leader is thrust upon him. Many workers, however, look forward to the time when they can buy a truck, transport a group of workers to the beet, cotton, or canning areas, and bargain for them in regard to wages, housing, and working conditions. A few of these workers may be unable to speak English, and in this case their range of potential contacts is greatly reduced (*1*).

The crew system provides a relatively simple method of moving and handling large numbers of workers. It also simplifies the farmer's problem of handling labor on the job. The entire harvesting, thinning, or other operation can be taken over by the crew leader. However, the crew system may be wasteful of labor. Matching size of crew and size of job is difficult. Large crews in areas of small farms mean many short jobs and a great deal of moving about.[10]

The present system of crews and crew leaders in southern Texas has developed and improved over a period of time. Although leaders of smaller crews may continue to handle a crew of about the same size for years, the movement into and out of the crew business is rapid. A crew leader who makes some bad job contacts is soon deserted by the crew members. A crew leader who fails to fulfill his job agreements is soon blacklisted by employers and is unable to find work for his crew. The chances of error are many; it takes an expert to satisfy both farmers and workers over a period of years. The more successful crew leaders are likely to become large-scale labor contractors, company recruiters, or labor superintendents, and to have a place eventually in the larger pattern of labor mobilization and management.

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[9] These differences are due partly to the fact that employers in some areas look on a strongly organized crew system with disfavor and try to keep it from gaining an established foothold in their labor market. A new leader may bargain either on the side of the employer or on the side of the workers, or against both and for himself. This may change from job to job; it depends on the group with which he feels the closest identification of interest.

[10] For advantages and disadvantages of the crew leader system, see The Labor Contractor System in Agriculture (*20*).

For a presentation of the abuses of the crew leader system, see We Talked to the Migrants (*7*). No data are available as to the frequency of these practices.

How crews fit into the annual worker plan is discussed in The Annual Worker Plan: Organized Migration Versus Aimless Wandering (*8*).

In connection with the survey reported, 31 crew leaders were interviewed concerning their activities the previous year. In San Antonio, the names of these leaders were taken from lists in the office of the State Employment Commission. In the other cities, a crew-leader schedule was taken from all crew leaders who lived in the sample areas. The size and composition of their crews were as follows:

| Size group | All crews in size group | Crews in which members of crew leader's family represented— | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All of crew | More than half of crew | Less than half of crew | None of crew |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| 5 to 10 | 8 | 3 | | 4 | 1 |
| 11 to 15 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 6 | |
| 16 to 20 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| 21 to 25 | 3 | | | 3 | |
| 26 to 30 | 3 | | | 2 | 1 |
| 30 and over | 3 | | | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 31 | 6 | 3 | 19 | 3 |

These figures indicate the number of workers at the time the crews left southern Texas. The 31 crews had a total of 580 workers, or an average of 19 workers per crew. This figure is distorted, however, because of one crew with 78 members; hence, the median number of workers, 14, provides a better figure as to the usual size of a crew. Of the 580 crew members, 180 were also members of the crew leader's family. These workers were concentrated in the smaller crews.

For three of the crew leaders, 1956 had been their first season, and seven had been leading crews for only 3 years. At the other extreme, two had been leading crews for 15 and one for 17 years. The data for the entire group are:

| *Number of years leading crews* | *Number of leaders* |
|---|---|
| 1 to 4 | 12 |
| 5 to 8 | 6 |
| 9 to 12 | 9 |
| 13 to 17 | 4 |

Twenty-four, or approximately three-fourths, of these 31 crew leaders were migratory workers who had moved up to the crew-leader position. Before becoming crew leaders, four had been construction workers, two had been truck drivers, and one had been an employee of the county. Those coming from nonfarm jobs had become crew leaders some 8 to 12 years ago when nonfarm employment was reduced after World War II.

Crew leading is a seasonal activity. Crews break up when the workers return to southern Texas, and at the home base each man and each crew leader is on his own. During the winter, 11 of the crew leaders did farmwork, 3 did construction work, 3 drove trucks, and 6 did miscellaneous types of nonfarm work. Six of the crew leaders rested and laid plans for the trip the following year.

## Methods of Recruitment

Twenty-six crew leaders reported that recruitment was no problem for them as relatives, friends, and workers from previous years made up their crews. Furthermore, some of them worked cooperatively with company recruiters who were willing to advance funds for travel expenses. Sugar-beet companies and canners made such advances to workers only to discourage the bringing of nonworkers who would fill up the cars, trucks, and camps.

Three of the five crew leaders who had difficulty with recruitment called on the Texas Employment Commission to recruit for them. The other two went to the town plaza to enlist the number of workers they needed.

Most crew leaders maintain close contact with their workers during the winter to make sure that they are not picked up by someone else. When competition for workers becomes intense, crews may be moved out ahead of the season to put them out of reach of "labor pirates." If a man's crew deserts him, he may be out of business. But if he has a number of work commitments for the season and cannot obtain the needed workers, he may proceed to the work area and try recruiting workers there. A crew leader who has been able to sign up desirable jobs is not likely to have this trouble.

A crew leader who can retain the same workers from season to season is proud of his achievement; he attributes it to his honesty and fair dealing. Approximately one-third of the crews had the same workers in 1956 that they had had in 1955. Another third retained from one-third to two-thirds of their members. The remaining third had only a few of the previous year's crews, probably family members, to start with.

Yet the tendency is for crew membership to shift over a period of years. The crew leaders were asked what percentage of their workers had been with them 5 years or more. Six reported that under 10 percent had been with them 5 years or more; 5, 10 to 24 percent; 4, 25 to 49 percent; and 4, 50 percent and over.

These percentages are so low as to indicate that most of the 5-year workers were members of the crew leader's family.

## Turnover During the Work Season

A crew leader fortunate enough to have commitments with farmers who have high yields, good field conditions, and adequate housing will have many applications to join his crew during the season. Conversely, a crew leader who has signed up for farms on which it is difficult to make wages or on which housing, working conditions, or other factors are uninviting may lose all or part of his crew.

During the 1956 season, 17 of the 31 crews lost no workers. The other 14 lost a total of 203 members. Only 354 of the 580 workers with whom the crew leaders left were retained throughout the trip. These workers probably included the 180 family workers, plus an almost equal number of nonfamily workers.

Ten crews added 297 workers during the trip. The total figure is distorted, however, because the largest crew, which had 78 members when it left southern Texas, gained 230 workers and lost 75. The other crews, then, gained only 67 workers, which means that they had a net loss of workers during the trip. The leaders of two crews that gained workers, including the leader who gained so many, added workers by applying at local offices of the State employment service in the work areas. The other crew leaders stated that the additional workers had come to them.

## Arrangements About Jobs

Successful crew leaders build up job connections over a period of years. Farmers who find a crew that is efficient and reliable ask it to return year after year. A successful crew leader keeps in touch also with farmers with whom he has had good work relationships. Communication by mail not only assures him of the job but lets him know when to come and how many workers will be needed.

Twelve crew leaders had their jobs through contacts from the previous year. Of these, nine reported that they had had correspondence with farmers concerning their work before the trip north, and one said he had made a trip north before the season opened in order to make his job contacts. Twelve crew leaders were contacted by company representatives before they left home, and three were in touch with the employment service in regard to jobs in the work area.

Only six crew leaders reported that they had started out without some type of job commitment. Three of them, however, went back to the same farmers they had worked for the previous year. Two of those without job contacts followed the routine cotton migration in Texas. The third struck out on a new route into Oregon and Idaho.

These figures indicate that very little of the movement from southern Texas was unplanned or undirected. Most of it was made to fill established job contacts. Some of the planning, however, could not cover the entire trip north, and other job contacts were needed in addition to those made before the season opened. Thus continuity of employment in the work areas is still a problem.

Six crews worked for only 1 farmer during the trip north, and 11 more worked for 2 or 3 farmers. Preseason arrangements with this number of employers are simple. Ten crews, however, worked for four or five employers; and, when this is done, maintaining contacts with each becomes difficult. One crew worked for 8 farmers and 3 worked for a number ranging from 11 to 15. The latter three crews also migrated widely. Two went to the Pacific Northwest and then to Arizona, and the third went to the Northwest and then to Florida. These crews had decided that they no longer wanted to work in Minnesota or Michigan and that they would look around for new areas. This type of crew activity is likely to upset preseason or year-to-year work arrangements that are not firmly established.

## Use of the Employment Service

Crew leaders call on the employment service for workers, job information, or placement when their own resources are inadequate. Approximately half of the crew leaders in the sample had made one of these types of contact with the employment service during 1956.

Crew leaders who had established long-range work arrangements with farmers thought they had little need for the assistance of State employment services. But new crew leaders and those with indefinite arrangements relied on them for a number of services. These relationships occurred more frequently in Texas but existed also in other States. These services may be listed as follows:

| *Service given* | *Number of crews using this service* | *Frequency of use, by States* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Getting workers | 4 | Texas | 1 |
| | | Wisconsin | 2 |
| | | Missouri | 1 |
| Information on crop conditions | 4 | Texas | 1 |
| | | Ohio | 1 |
| | | Michigan | 1 |
| | | Arizona | 1 |
| | | Oregon | 1 |
| | | Idaho | 1 |
| Advice as to where workers are needed | 8 | Texas | 5 |
| | | Missouri | 1 |
| | | Michigan | 1 |
| | | Idaho | 1 |
| | | Oregon | 1 |
| | | Arizona | 1 |
| | | Washington | 1 |
| Help in finding jobs | 13 | Texas | 5 |
| | | Arizona | 2 |
| | | Utah | 1 |
| | | Idaho | 1 |
| | | Washington | 1 |
| | | North Dakota | 1 |
| | | Missouri | 1 |

## Work for the Same Employer for 2 Years

The smaller the number of employers a crew worked for, the more likely it was that employment was continued from year to year. Crew leaders were asked to furnish a 2-year record of employment. These records show:

| Number of farmers worked for in 1956 | Number of crew leaders who reported this number of farmers | Number of crew leaders who reported that 1955 and 1956 employers were— | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All the same | Part the same | None the same |
| 1 | 6 | 6 | | |
| 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 3 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | |
| 5 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| 8 | 1 | | 1 | |
| 12 | 1 | | | 1 |
| 13 | 1 | | 1 | |
| 15 | 1 | | | 1 |

Large employers, such as canners, depend on a certain volume of vegetables to keep their plants busy each year; they are able to enter into rather stable employment arrangements. Smaller farmers are more likely to have fluctuations in acreages, yields, and working conditions. Small holdings and fluctuating yields, then, make for irregularity of migratory labor demand, which in turn makes preseason planning more difficult. Job-to-job arrangements may be all that is possible in some areas and in some seasons.

The 2-year employers were located largely in Texas, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, although some were scattered over nine other States.

## Major Work Areas and Crops

Some indication has been given as to where some of the crew traveled. The crews were divided into seven different groups, according to the areas in which they worked.

| *Type of group* | *Number of crews* |
|---|---|
| Texas cotton crews | 12 |
| Lake States canning and sugar-beet crews | 11 |
| Lake States and Texas cotton crews | 2 |
| Northwest sugar-beet and potato crews | 2 |
| Northwest sugar-beet and Arizona cotton crews | 2 |
| Northwest sugar-beet and Florida vegetable crews | 1 |
| Delaware vegetable crew | 1 |

Altogether, 14 crews worked in Texas, 6 in Wisconsin, 4 in Minnesota, 4 in Idaho, and 3 in Michigan, with smaller numbers in 12 other States. A total of 16 different crews worked in cotton, 12 worked in sugar beets, 23 in some type of canning vegetable or fruit crop, and 8 in potatoes.

The crew leaders were asked about recent changes in work areas and why they had made the change. Their replies were as follows:

| *State discontinued* | *Crews (number)* | *Reasons for change* |
|---|---|---|
| Minnesota | 4 | Too much rain. |
| Michigan | 3 | Hired too early, lost too much time, ground too hard.<br>Given no gas to make trip. |
| North Dakota | 2 | Farmers did not pay the agreed wage rate. |
| California | 1 | Crew disliked work by the hour. |
| Oklahoma | 1 | Would not permit children to work. |
| New Mexico | 1 | Crew refused to return. |
| Montana<br>Oregon<br>Idaho<br>Wisconsin | 1 | Crew preferred to work in Delaware. |

To some extent, these changes meant merely a reshuffling of crews, but there was a net gain of three crews to the Pacific Northwest, two to Texas, and one to Delaware.

## Time Lost

Some loss of time is inevitable in relation to seasonal farmwork. Crops may be slow to ripen; work may be delayed by rain; or crops may be suddenly destroyed by rain, frost, sunburn, or other unforeseeable conditions. Yet time may be lost if workers are brought into an area too early, if canneries are unable to keep up with the flow of fruit or vegetables from the fields, or if some other element of mismanagement is present. Crew leaders were asked about the amount of time lost and the reason for the loss. The reason most frequently given was weather. However, this covered such situations as "crop was slow to ripen" or "crew arrived at work area too early."[11] Crew leaders made rough estimates as to the total number of man-days lost during the migration period; it amounted to 10,228 man-days, or an average of around 18 days per worker.[12] The loss by States and by months is shown in table 29. Losses appeared to be especially high in Wisconsin, although no special complaint was made by any crew leader about weather or working conditions in this State.

## Crew Leader Activities and Payment

Crew leaders are primarily a point of contact between an employer and a group of workers. The agreement as to the work to be done, the rate of pay, transportation to the work area, housing, and quality of work expected is made between the crew leader and the employer. Ordinarily, the worker accepts the arrangement that has been made. If he dislikes it too strongly, he may decide to join another crew or strike out for himself.

The crew leaders were questioned as to the amounts paid them by the workers; such amounts were both infrequent and small. Usually, the payments made were for transportation back to the home base; they were made after the workers had received wages with which to pay. Payment of transportation costs was reported to be as follows:

| Transportation | Transportation provided— | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | To the work area | To the home base | To field each day |
| Paid by— | | | |
| Employer | 17 | 7 | 9 |
| Crew leader | 12 | 14 | 19 |
| Worker [1] | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| No transportation furnished | | 4 | 2 |

[1] Actually, the worker pays for more of the transportation to the work area than this figure indicates; for example, a Colorado sugar-beet company advances the crew leader $17 (one cent a mile) for each worker hauled. The sugar company charges this amount to the farmer, who in turn deducts it from the worker's paycheck. Many other employers follow a similar practice. Frequently, the advance is not charged against the worker if he stays on the job until the end of the season.

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[11] In Oregon, more than one-fourth of the crew leaders reported loss of time resulting from adverse weather or no work at the time they arrived. See Survey of Oregon Agriculture (*18, pt. 2*).

[12] The workers had reported an average of 28 days lost during the trip away from the home base. This figure is likely to be more accurate because crew leaders endeavored to minimize loss of time. They reported days lost because of adverse weather and other external causes but were inclined to overlook days lost owing to poor management or lack of understanding of the labor market.

TABLE 29.—*Workdays lost by 26 migratory crews during period away from home base in southern Texas, by States, 1956*[1]

| State | May | | June | | July | | August | | September | | October | | November | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Crews | Time lost | Crews | Time lost | Crews | Time lost | Crews | Time lost | Crews | Time lost | Crews | Time lost | Crews | Time lost |
| | *No.* | *Days* | *No.* | *Days* | *No.* | *Days* | *No.* | *Days* | *No.* | *Days* | *No.* | *Days* | *No.* | *Days* |
| Texas | 1 | 6 | | | | | 2 | 21 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 17 | 4 | 45 |
| Minnesota | | | 3 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Michigan | | | 1 | 12 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wisconsin | 1 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 16 | 4 | 20 | 3 | 15 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Ohio | 2 | 19 | 1 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Illinois | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 10 | | |
| North Dakota | | | 1 | 30 | | | 1 | 30 | | | | | | |
| Kansas | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Utah | | | | | | | 1 | 21 | | | | | | |
| Idaho | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 15 | 1 | 4 |
| Oregon | | | | | | | | | 2 | 34 | 1 | 15 | | |
| Washington | | | 1 | 30 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Delaware | | | 1 | 30 | | | | | | | | | | |
| All States | 5 | 30 | 11 | 140 | 4 | 16 | 8 | 92 | 6 | 56 | 8 | 60 | 6 | 51 |

[1] 5 crews lost no time during their stay away from home base.

Crew leaders emphasized that they furnished most services to the workers without charge and that they maintained no store or commissary. Only a few charged for transportation, and frequently this was in the form of sharing expenses. No charge was made for making arrangements in regard to jobs, working conditions, housing, and the like. Instead, the crew leader made his money by hauling produce to the cannery or gin. This might yield from $20 to $50 a day, depending on the size of his crew.

Fifteen crew leaders reported that the farmer had paid the crews, while three stated that the canning company had paid them. Payment by the farmer was common practice in both the Lake States and the Pacific Northwest. Eleven crew leaders stated that they had handled the payrolls for the workers. This practice was most common in Texas. Two crew leaders said that they paid the workers on some farms while the farmer did the paying on others.

Many crew leaders did some work in the field. Two said they worked in the field with the crews all the time, and 16 said they did so most of the time. Eight worked in the field only occasionally, and five did no fieldwork. Whether the crew leader does fieldwork depends on the size of the crew and whether he is given the job of hauling produce from the field.

## Types of Work Contracts

Workers in all except a few areas were employed on a piece-rate basis negotiated between the farmer and the crew leader. The major exception was that of employees of canning companies who were sometimes paid the legal minimum wage of $1 per hour for cannery employees. Workers in sugar beets were also paid according to a government scale, but this permitted some bargaining because of differences in field conditions. Payment was on a per acre basis according to established standards, which varied from area to area and as to the type of operation performed.

Some crew leaders stated that neither the workers nor the crew leaders were receiving as much as they received several years ago. Some leaders thought that imported Mexican nationals were employed by farmers as a means of depressing wage rates and that these workers were making work more irregular. Expenses to crew leaders for such items as gasoline, tires, repairs, and new equipment doubled, while they had no way of raising their rates accordingly.

Examination of the rates for several crops leads to the conclusion that crew leaders have done better than the workers under them. Using cotton as an illustration, the traditional rate to the crew leader has been $0.25 per 100 pounds of seed cotton for hauling to the gin. The rate to the workers has been around $2.00 to $2.75 per 100 pounds for picking cotton and around $1.50 to $1.75 for snapping it. Recently, crew leaders have protested against the $0.25 rate for hauling, and some have obtained $0.50. Wage rates for picking and pulling cotton, however, have declined since 1951.[13]

The rates to workers and crew leaders for picking and pulling cotton were reported to have been as follows:

| *Rates to worker* | *Rates to crew leader* | *Number of times reported* |
|---|---|---|
| $1.25 | $0.25 | 1 |
| 1.50 | .25 | 3 |
| 1.50 | .50 | 3 |
| 1.75 | .25 | 4 |
| 1.75 | .50 | 1 |
| 2.00 | .25 | 1 |
| 2.00 | .50 | 1 |
| 2.50 | .35 | 1 |

The present confusion in the cotton wage-rate structure may be observed from the fact that some crew leaders now get a third of the rate paid to the worker, while others get as little as an eighth.

Although sugar-beet workers are paid a rate determined by Department of Agriculture officials after a public hearing, rates to crew leaders are still a matter of individual negotiation. Some crew leaders were paid a commission of $2 per acre for all acreages handled by members of their crews; others were paid $10 a day for hauling the workers to the field; and still others were paid $1 per acre for supervision. Many, however, worked in the field as the head of the family and received no extra pay.

### Problems of Crew Leaders

A question concerning the problems the crew leaders had experienced in 1956 brought into focus a variety of situations, seven of which had to do with wages or other financial matters. Three crew leaders stated that some employers had paid their workers at a lower rate than they had been promised. Two leaders of Texas cotton crews reported that wage rates had become so low that the workers were threatening to quit. One crew leader had transported his workers a considerable distance to the field each day but had received no pay for doing so. The members of one crew had left without paying the crew leader for transportation.

Getting a crew and holding it together was also a major problem for some crew leaders. Two stated that the labor-supply situation had become so difficult they could barely find enough workers to make the trip. One crew leader lost his entire crew when it rebelled at the housing on an Ohio farm. Another crew leader felt that he was at a disadvantage because children could no longer work while schools were in session.

Despite these disadvantages, 19 crew leaders planned to recruit crews of the same size in 1957, and 4 expected to have larger crews. Three crew leaders said they would take smaller crews in 1957, and four stated that probably they would not take crews. Of the latter group, one had decided to change to transporting imported workers; 1956 had been such a bad season for another that he had gone into debt and lost his truck; and a third had been deserted by his crew in Wisconsin with the crew members still owing him for transportation.

## SOCIAL SECURITY EXPERIENCE OF THE MIGRATORY WORKERS

The experience of these workers with social security was limited, and most of them had little knowledge of its purposes. Sixty-one percent of the heads of households said that social security payments had been collected from them (table 30). Ordinarily, these collections were made by farm operators, although those for a few workers were made by crew leaders or nonfarm employers.

Approximately a third had made no social security payments to anyone, and 8 percent had no idea whether any money had been deducted from their pay checks for social security.

Those who had paid into social security knew that the money was to be saved for them for their old age, but few were aware of any benefits to

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[13] For average cotton picking rates by States, see Farm Labor (*32*). The 1951 rate in Texas averaged $3 per hundredweight; the 1956 rate, $2.65. Rates reported by the crew leaders are well below these levels, but most reported rates were for pulling rather than picking cotton.

TABLE 30.—*Social security experience reported by heads of migratory households, southern Texas, January 1957*

| Item | All household heads | Percentage of all household heads |
|---|---|---|
| Household heads who— | *Number* | *Percent* |
| Had paid into social security | 272 | 61 |
| Had not paid into social security | 136 | 31 |
| Did not know | 37 | 8 |
| Household heads whose social security premiums were collected by— | | |
| Farm employers: | | |
| Always | 135 | 30 |
| Sometimes | 101 | 23 |
| Total | 236 | 53 |
| Crew leaders: | | |
| Always | 13 | 3 |
| Sometimes | 10 | 2 |
| Total | 23 | 5 |
| Nonfarm employers: | | |
| Always | 13 | 3 |
| Sometimes | 3 | 1 |
| Total | 16 | 4 |
| Household heads who expected to get from social security payments— | | |
| Old-age benefits | 264 | 60 |
| Survivors' benefits | 6 | 1 |
| Nothing [1] | 9 | 2 |
| Total | 279 | 63 |
| Household heads who did not know what to expect or were misinformed [2] | 166 | 37 |
| Total household heads reporting | 445 | 100 |

[1] Sometimes reported that farmer or crew leader would keep deductions.
[2] Frequently confused with unemployment insurance.

survivors. A few said they expected to get nothing from it. More than a third either had no idea as to what social security was or had a wrong conception of it. The most common erroneous conception was that the money would be repaid to them when they became unemployed.

The crew leaders had had very little experience with social security. Four were aware that in 1957 they would need to do something about it. But in 1956, none had made any deductions for this purpose. Eleven, however, had worked for farmers who planned to make some social security deductions.

## THE MOVEMENT OUT OF MIGRATORY FARMWORK

Southern Texas is the home base for farmworkers and serves as an operational base for Spanish-Americans who are climbing the occupational ladder. The workers who came across from Mexico at the turn of the century were highly regarded because they performed the more tedious and undesirable farm jobs without protest. As they moved about over the country, however, the Spanish-Americans picked up new ideas as to jobs, working conditions, and ways of advancing their interests. They set up Spanish-American settlements in Detroit, Chicago, Kansas City, Denver, and other cities and towns in the central part of the United States. At these points, they became dependable workers in mills and factories. Their children have become interested in education, the professions, politics, and other aspects of the American way of life.

The movement of Spanish-Americans out of farm labor into nonfarm employment is rapid both in the work areas and at the home base. The drift into migratory farmwork was easy for workers who had few alternatives to this type of employment and for heads of large families who were willing to use all members of the family in an effort to earn a living. Gradually, as Spanish-American workers gained experience and skill along nonfarm lines, they found it more profitable to work in jobs at the home base. Furthermore, their pay was often sufficient, so that work by all members of the family became unnecessary. Also, child labor came into social and legal disrepute; it no longer offered the economic possibilities it once had.

In the Spanish-American sections of San Antonio at the time of the survey, the proportion of the population who were migratory farmworkers, approximately 10,000 of a total of 250,000, had become insignificant. The proportion of migrants in the other sample areas was higher, probably because of less opportunity to shift to nonfarm employment.

A schedule of questions was developed to be asked of workers who had not migrated in 1956 but who had migrated at some time during the previous 4 years. These questions related only to exmigrants at the home base and not to those who remained in the work areas or elsewhere. These workers proved to be of three different types: (1) Those who had not migrated in 1956 because of some temporary circumstance, such as childbirth or illness, but who would migrate in the future; (2) those who had decided to quit migratory farmwork permanently; and (3) those who were undecided as to whether they would migrate in the future. In the sample areas, 456 workers had not migrated in 1956, although they had done so at some time during the 4 previous years. Of the 456, only 56—or about 12 percent—planned to migrate again. A total of 298, or 65 percent, were reported as having stopped migrating. One-fourth were undecided as to plans for the future.

In enumerating these people, only those 14 years old or over were reported. Small children, however, were an important factor in the decision as to whether a family would migrate.

The workers tended to migrate or to stop migrating as entire family groups rather than as individuals. Only 16 of 298 individuals had stopped without affecting the migration of the rest of the family group. They were largely sons or daughters who had either married or struck out for themselves, but they included a few ill or elderly people. Twenty-four different households or economic units were represented in the group that planned to migrate again, 34 in the group that was undecided, and 103 in the group that had stopped migrating.

## Those Who Plan To Migrate Again

Those who planned to migrate again had not done so in 1956 because of temporary circumstances that made migration inadvisable. They were mainly young people who had been migrating for less than 10 years and who had worked largely in Texas cotton and in Michigan and Wisconsin sugar beets and vegetables. Apparently, they had not located work adequate for their needs at the home base. Occupations and activities of members of this group were reported as follows:

| Occupation | Heads | Wives | Children |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Working | 16 | -------- | 1 |
| Construction | 3 | -------- | 1 |
| Trucker, loader | 5 | -------- | -------- |
| Other nonfarmwork | 5 | -------- | -------- |
| Farmwork | 3 | -------- | -------- |
| Not working | 8 | 13 | 18 |
| Unemployed | 4 | -------- | 3 |
| Housewife | -------- | 13 | 5 |
| In school | -------- | -------- | 10 |
| Retired, sick, and so on | 4 | -------- | -------- |
| Total | 24 | 13 | 19 |

Only 17 of 56 potential workers and only 16 of 24 heads of households were employed at the time of the survey; hence, migration was almost a necessity for most households in this group.

## Those Who Were Undecided

Whether families migrate was not entirely a matter for their own decision. Some workers did not go in 1956 and were undecided about 1957 because there were too many nonworkers in their families. Neither crew leaders nor company recruiters were willing to advance them transportation and other costs, and it was hazardous for them to strike out on their own. Several years ago they might have done so, but child labor laws have made employers wary about hiring children. Therefore, there is a period in the life cycle of a rapidly growing family when it is at a disadvantage in the migratory labor market.

Illness, childbirth, and good employment at the home base also produced indecision. Most workers in the undecided group, therefore, were interested in migrating but were prevented from doing so because of family circumstances.

The jobs reported by these people at the time of the survey were as follows:

| Occupation | Heads | Wives | Children |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Working: | | | |
| Packinghouse, cannery | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Construction | 8 | | 1 |
| Trucker, loader | 4 | | |
| Other nonfarmwork | 7 | 2 | 6 |
| Farmwork | 4 | | 1 |
| Total working | 28 | 5 | 12 |
| Not working: | | | |
| Unemployed | 3 | | 2 |
| Housewife | | 28 | 1 |
| In school | | | 21 |
| Retired, sick, and so on | 3 | | |
| Armed services | | | 3 |
| Total not working | 6 | 28 | 27 |
| Total persons reporting | 34 | 33 | 39 |

At the time of the survey these people were in a better economic position than were those who were migrating again. Of 34 heads of households, 28 were employed, as compared with 16 in 24 of the other group. But they were supplemented by 17 additional workers, whereas there was only 1 additional worker in each of the 24 migrating households. Yet the 61 nonworkers above 14 years of age, plus the 48 nonworking children, probably looked like unused manpower to them.[14]

## Those Who Have Left the Migratory Stream Permanently

Of major interest perhaps are the 294 workers who reported that they had left migratory farmwork permanently. Almost half of these workers were living in San Antonio; there were relatively few in Crystal City or Eagle Pass. This may reflect the greater number of opportunities in nonfarm employment in the larger city. Building and residential construction were proceeding rapidly, and a good many unskilled and semiskilled workers were needed.

The people who had stopped migrating were predominantly young—a third of them were from 20 to 29 years old—but they did not average so young as the persons who were still thinking of migrating. The age groupings were as follows:

| Age group | Number of persons in each group— | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Who will migrate again | Who are undecided | Who have quit migrating |
| Under 20 years | 12 | 30 | 69 |
| 20 to 29 years | 14 | 24 | 97 |
| 30 to 39 years | 9 | 26 | 33 |
| 40 to 49 years | 11 | 14 | 58 |
| 50 to 59 years | 8 | 6 | 25 |
| 60 years and over | 1 | 2 | 12 |
| No data | | 2 | |
| Total | 55 | 104 | 294 |

Ordinarily, those who stopped migrating were not those who had had long periods of migration. On an average, they had not migrated quite as long as those who were planning to go again.

| Number of years migrated | Number of persons— | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Who will migrate again | Who are undecided | Who have quit migrating |
| 1 to 5 | 20 | 54 | 141 |
| 6 to 10 | 20 | 23 | 79 |
| 11 to 15 | 2 | 12 | 33 |
| 16 and over | 3 | | 9 |
| No data | 9 | 15 | 34 |

The accuracy of these data is marred by the fact that one worker frequently reported for other members of the household and was unwilling to indicate when the others started migrating. This factor may reduce the number of long-term migrants.

As those who had stopped migrating were predominantly young and short-term migrants, old age must be ruled out as a significant factor in their quitting. The decision to migrate or not to migrate appears instead to be related to the employment of members of the family. The occupations of the workers who had stopped migrating are shown in table 31.

The most noticeable aspect of this list of occupations as compared with those of the other groups is the larger proportion of wives and children who had employment. Evidently, this represents a change from youth who are able to do farmwork only to those who can handle nonfarm jobs. The work of the head of the family was still close to the bottom of the occupational ladder, but it shows some advantage over that of people in the other groups.

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[14] The full story of the effect of young children on the decision to migrate cannot be presented in this report, as individual records of persons under 10 years of age were not obtained. The statements of parents, however, indicated that young and school-age children presented a difficult problem.

TABLE 31.—*Present occupation of persons who had quit migratory work within preceding 4 years, by family status, southern Texas, 1957*

| Present occupation | Household heads [1] | Wives | Children |
|---|---|---|---|
| Working: | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Packinghouse, cannery, warehouse | 10 | 1 | 6 |
| Construction | 16 | -------- | 7 |
| Cafe, laundry, personal service | 3 | 2 | 16 |
| Trucker, loader | 12 | -------- | 3 |
| Salesman, store clerk | 3 | -------- | 6 |
| Mechanic, factory work | 11 | -------- | 6 |
| Odd jobs, etc | 11 | -------- | 7 |
| Farmwork | 7 | -------- | 4 |
| Armed Forces | -------- | -------- | 4 |
| Total | 73 | 3 | 59 |
| Not working: | | | |
| Unemployed | 14 | 1 | 22 |
| Housewife | -------- | 61 | 25 |
| In school | -------- | -------- | 28 |
| Retired, sick, etc | 10 | 2 | -------- |
| Total | 24 | 64 | 75 |
| Grand total | 97 | 67 | 134 |

[1] Includes 16 workers without families.

The families who had stopped migrating were in better economic position than the families in the other two groups. A comparison of the home-base employment of the primary and supplementary workers in the three types of households runs as follows:

| Group | Heads employed | Supplementary workers employed | Persons 14 and over not working |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Those migrating again | 67 | 3 | 70 |
| Those undecided | 82 | 24 | 57 |
| Those who quit | 77 | 31 | 47 |

## Reasons for Quitting

Workers were asked to explain why they had stopped migrating. Usually, the answers were given on an individual basis; but, when all members of a household quit at the same time, a complex of reasons was involved. For example, one worker reported that he had quit because he had obtained more desirable work; but his schedule indicated also that his four daughters had married and left home during the previous winter. The head of the household had followed a rather common pattern. When sons or daughters leave or obtain regular employment, the family is likely to settle down.

The following family circumstances may be listed as important in taking a family out of the migratory labor force: (1) More than one person in the family with a local job; (2) one or more children leaving home and no longer contributing to family support; (3) a large number of children below working age; and (4) parents too old or ill to work.

These circumstances also point up the family situation that is conducive to joining the migratory stream: (1) A number of youth or other persons in a family who are old enough to do farmwork are without experience in nonfarm employment; and (2) when all members of the family work, they can earn much more than when the head is the only breadwinner.

The complex of family and job circumstances is shown in table 32. The most frequent occurrence was that the head obtained a permanent job, but this reason did not stand alone as often as it was coupled with such circumstances as young children in the family or youth who had recently struck out for themselves. Young children might pin a family down whether the head of the group was unemployed or underemployed.

When migration stopped because of children leaving home, a supplementary factor was involved: Either the head or some other member of the family had also obtained employment at the home base. When a worker stopped because of illness or old age, other circumstances commonly entered into the family situation.

The decision to stop migrating when children of working age leave home may not be entirely a matter of economics. It is an important precept in Spanish-American culture that children

TABLE 32.—*Job and family circumstances that contributed to decision to quit migratory farmwork, families who had quit within preceding 4 years, southern Texas, 1956*

| Family circumstances | Job circumstances | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None contributing [1] | Better job obtained by [2]— | | | No money in migratory work | Total |
| | | Household head | Other member or members | Both | | |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Families in which— | | | | | | |
| There are young children | 12 | 14 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 33 |
| Children have left [3] | ---- | 7 | 7 | 1 | ---- | 15 |
| There is illness or old age | 8 | ---- | 4 | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| There is a combination of the above | ---- | 2 | 1 | ---- | ---- | 3 |
| None of above situations exist | ---- | 19 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 37 |
| All families reporting | 20 | 42 | 23 | 12 | 6 | 103 |

[1] In most families, workers were unemployed or underemployed at time of interview.

[2] Term "better job" was used to cover more desirable work, more permanent jobs, and better-paying jobs.

[3] This item was reported infrequently but was deduced from the schedules.

should work and learn habits of industry rather than loaf and become lazy. If a parent is unable to find work for his children in the home community, it is better to take them where there is work to be done.

The reasons given for not migrating show some change in the attitudes of Spanish-American workers. Approximately half of the families who reported that young children were involved in their decision to stop migrating specified that they were schoolchildren rather than babes-in-arms. As recently as a decade or two ago, school attendance would not have been regarded as a reason for staying at home. This change in attitude may be due entirely to compliance with child-labor and school-attendance laws, or it may show a growing realization of the value of an education (*9*). In either case, it appears that child-labor legislation is now effective in keeping families with teenage children at home.

A few workers stated that machinery or imported workers had reduced the amount of work to be done so much that it was now unprofitable for them to migrate. Although most workers did not mention these factors, the fact that a few did so indicates that they may have some part in reducing the size of the domestic migratory-labor force.

The reasons for stopping are given also on an individual basis, as tabulated in table 33. The data indicate that many youth but few wives have become workers at the home base. They indicate also that parents reported they stayed at home because of jobs or young children and not because the older children had left. Ordinarily, the latter reason is not listed in the reports on the schedules; it must be deduced.

TABLE 33.—*Reasons given for quitting migratory farmwork by workers who had quit within preceding 4 years, by family status, southern Texas, 1957*

| Reasons for quitting migratory work | Household status | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Heads | Wives | Children |
| | *Number* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Workers who found— | | | |
| More permanent work | 35 | 1 | 30 |
| More desirable work | 22 | 1 | 15 |
| More money | 7 | 1 | 5 |
| Total | 64 | 3 | 50 |
| Workers who quit because of— | | | |
| Illness, old age | 17 | 12 | 1 |
| Children in family | 15 | 16 | 15 |
| Son or daughter leaving | 3 | 3 | 25 |
| Total | 35 | 31 | 41 |
| Household head quitting | ---- | 28 | 36 |
| No longer making money | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Total | 105 | 67 | 134 |

## Movement Away From the Area

Heads of households who were still migrating were asked whether they had ever considered going out of migratory farmwork. Approximately 15 percent responded in the affirmative (table 34). Apparently, the young men considered it more frequently than the older ones. The usual reasons, such as better jobs at home, small children, and old age, were given for this type of thinking. But, most surprising, the reason given in half the cases was no job at the home base. For these people, to stop migrating meant going away from the home-base area to some point at which it would be possible to obtain permanent employment. This response may be only a temporary reaction to the years of drought and lack of employment in the Southwest, but it shows that unemployment at any spot in the migration cycle may result in a reduction in the domestic migratory labor force.

TABLE 34.—*Intentions of household heads to continue or to quit migratory farmwork, by range of movement and by age, southern Texas, January 1957*

| Group | All household heads | | Number and percentage of household heads who— | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Plan to quit | | Plan to continue | | Are uncertain about quitting | |
| | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* |
| All household heads reporting | 438 | 100 | 81 | 19 | 256 | 58 | 101 | 23 |
| Range of movement: | | | | | | | | |
| Intrastate | 135 | 100 | 28 | 21 | 78 | 58 | 29 | 21 |
| Interstate | 158 | 100 | 23 | 15 | 97 | 61 | 38 | 24 |
| Both | 145 | 100 | 30 | 21 | 81 | 56 | 34 | 23 |
| Age: | | | | | | | | |
| Under 24 years | 33 | 100 | 7 | 21 | 17 | 52 | 9 | 27 |
| 24 to 34 years | 94 | 100 | 22 | 23 | 50 | 54 | 22 | 23 |
| 35 to 44 years | 102 | 100 | 21 | 21 | 58 | 56 | 23 | 23 |
| 45 years and over | 209 | 100 | 31 | 15 | 131 | 63 | 47 | 22 |

# FUTURE TRENDS

The system of migratory farm labor in the midcontinent area is still undergoing adaptation to changing conditions. On the one hand, both mechanization and use of foreign labor are shifting the patterns of demand for domestic migrant labor. Adding to the effect of these trends is the permanent settlement of former migrants in the work areas and the growth of the day-haul system. Under these circumstances, migrants need to be more careful in planning their work routes or they may lose a great deal of time.

On the other hand, the supply of domestic labor available for movement to the seasonal work areas in the midcontinent is diminishing also. As Spanish-American workers in southern Texas are able to qualify for and find local permanent employment either at the home base or in the work areas, they are lost as potential migrant workers.

Although both the demand for and the supply of migrant labor are diminishing, the two trends cannot be kept in balance. Changes tend to be local in nature and to vary from place to place and from year to year. They may increase as well as decrease local demands; as when new lands are brought under irrigation or there is a shift to fruit or vegetable production. Under these circumstances, an improved guidance program for migrant workers becomes imperative if this labor force is to be utilized efficiently.

## Future Demand for Domestic Migratory Labor

The demand for migratory workers in the midcontinent area is dropping sharply. The most rapid decrease has been in the demand for workers in sugar beets. Harvest operations are now almost completely mechanized, and recent developments will soon lead to the mechanization of thinning and hoeing (*2*). Recruitment of a labor supply to meet the high labor needs of this crop has been basic in the movement of workers from southern Texas to other States. In earlier years, all cotton was picked by hand. Now, many commercial growers have their fields picked over once by hand, then complete their harvest with mechanical strippers. This practice reduces the length of the hand-picking season by half and means added work stops for migratory workers. Other operators run mechanical pickers one or more times through their fields and thus avoid the use of hand workers (*16*, *45*). The cotton-producing area in the United States is shifting rapidly from the areas in which hand labor is still used to those that are highly mechanized.

A similar development is occurring in potato and snap-bean harvesting, and eventually the use of hand labor in these crops may be called for only in seasons when the weather puts machine use at a disadvantage. From two-thirds to three-fourths of the work that the migrants now do by hand may be done by machine within the next few years. But the harvesting of soft, perishable fruits and berries will not be mechanized so readily, and production of these crops in the midcontinent area is increasing.

The migrants themselves are reducing the need for transient labor by settling in the work areas. There they establish pools of local workers who can either make their own job contacts or operate through the day-haul system. This process of substituting local for migratory labor is slow, especially as many former migrants are likely to shift into permanent nonfarm employment. Some exmigrants who have had a taste of nonfarm employment lose interest in seasonal farmwork before they attain any skill along nonfarm lines. As a result, they may go through a period in which their productivity in both types of work is low.

Although the laws relating to importation of labor specifically provide that domestic workers have priority for all jobs, some farmers are inclined to weigh the advantages of imported against domestic workers. They observe that (1) all imported workers are able-bodied males, screened for physical fitness and agricultural experience before they enter; (2) they can be asked for and returned as they are needed and in as large numbers as are needed; (3) problems of child care, child labor, and education are avoided; and (4) recruitment by public agencies provides a certainty of a labor force. Under these circumstances, many farm employers show a preference for imported labor and make it difficult to maintain employment opportunities for domestic workers.

The Department of Labor and the affiliated State agencies, however, have an extensive program designed to keep importation to the minimum number needed to supplement domestic workers in the performance of seasonal farm tasks. The Department makes surveys of labor requirements for the major seasonal operations and the adequacy of domestic labor supplies to meet these needs in areas reported to have shortages of labor. These surveys are made from 30 to 60 days ahead of the active season; and, if a shortage is indicated, investigations are made as to the availability of domestic labor in other areas or States. Recently, efforts have been made to recruit unemployed industrial workers for these seasonal jobs. Surveys are made also of prevailing wage rates in the shortage areas, and employers are not permitted to pay a lower rate to imported workers. The international agreement between the United States and Mexico provides for a further minimum of 50 cents an hour.

The operation of this program depends partly on cooperation from growers who have a financial interest in an ample supply of labor. Growers do not know ahead of a harvest season how rapidly a crop will ripen, how favorable the weather will be, or how dependable a work crew they will have. An honest regard for their own interests, therefore, calls for having more workers than are barely necessary to do the job. Hence, they make a liberal statement of their needs. Their estimates, however, are subject to endorsement by employment service officials. The net effect of the importation program on the domestic labor supply is still an open question.

## Future Supply of Domestic Migratory Labor

The future supply of domestic migratory labor depends upon and is influenced by all the major factors that influence the economy in general. The factors that affect the supply can be grouped under three headings—general economic conditions, technology, and education.

The general health of our national and State economy affects the future supply of migratory workers because it determines the variety and number of nonagricultural jobs that will be available to them. In looking into the future, it is reasonable to assume that the Nation will continue to have the same general level of employment it has had since World War II. If this continued high level of employment is realized, the supply of migratory agricultural workers will decrease. To a large extent, migratory agricultural work is a marginal type of employment engaged in by people who lack more desirable employment alternatives. Under conditions of full employment, there will be a steady movement of the more competent, better educated, younger, and more talented migrants into more permanent jobs. Under these conditions, the rate of movement of migrants into other and more remunerative types of employment will depend primarily on two things. One is the rate of adoption of labor-saving practices by agricultural producers. The other involves developments that have occurred in the education of migrants.

Mechanization of farm operations is continuing at an accelerated pace; it can be expected to result in such irregular seasonal employment that workers will seek jobs that offer a greater measure of economic security. As previously indicated, the exact rate of adoption of labor-saving practices and machinery cannot be estimated; it will depend upon factors not easily defined or measured. A considerable time lag always occurs between the development of an economically practical labor-saving device and its general adoption. The replacement of a hand-labor operation by a machine for the whole industry usually takes not a year or two but a decade or two. The rate of adoption of new techniques depends first upon the ratio of the costs of the new technique to the costs of the old; and, second, upon each manager's attitude toward trying new and not completely proved techniques, his success in handling and his attitudes toward workers, the size of his operation, and the general factors that influence his attitudes and those of his associates in the community.

The rate at which migratory agricultural workers find better and steadier employment depends to a large extent on their ability to speak English and their educational background. In the past, when Spanish-speaking children were retarded from 1 to 4 years and schools were nonexistent or segregated, the Spanish-speaking sector of the population was seriously handicapped and was prevented from entering employment in a variety of jobs and occupations. This situation has changed rapidly during the last 20 years. Since World War II, most schools in southern Texas have been desegregated with reference to Spanish-speaking Texans; compulsory school-attendance laws have been enforced to a greater extent than formerly; and techniques have been worked out for eliminating retardation because of the language difficulty. In the future, a method of teaching basic English to Spanish-speaking pre-first graders probably will be incorporated into the State school system. The results of these changes will be to prepare Spanish-speaking people for jobs in all sectors of the economy. Improved education will permit them to take regular full-time jobs instead of migratory work.

Importation of labor also affects the supply of domestic migratory workers. Frequently, domestic workers are resentful when they find that jobs in the areas in which they had formerly worked are now handled by imported labor.[15] Their efforts to leave this type of work are redoubled by this experience. Experience in other areas indicates that when foreign workers begin to assume a dominant role in a certain area or operation, domestic workers are likely to desert it completely.[16]

Still another factor, the continued movement of workers across the Mexican border, enters into the labor situation in this area. Many who have learned the advantages of working in the United States wish to return. Only a limited number can come in on a contractual basis, but many others now come in as immigrants applying for citizenship. One of their best employment alternatives in this country will be as migratory farmworkers, so that we can expect replenishment of the migratory labor force for some years to come. There is always a possibility that either the Mexican or the United States Government might reduce or eliminate legal movement to this country; but, so long as the movement is to the mutual advantage of both countries, this is only a possibility.

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[15] Statements that imported workers had taken their jobs were general among the workers interviewed. To what extent this was merely a fear or had actually been experienced, was not determined. The workers were probably unfamiliar with the extensive program that had been set up to safeguard their rights.

[16] For experience of citrus producers in the Los Angeles area, see Labor Practices in the Food Industry Hearings (*36*). For a discussion of the economic aspects of importation, see Farm Labor: Supply, Policies, and Practices (*3*).

Against these factors must be balanced the effect of the general upward rise in education, wage levels, and standards of living that is occurring among workers in this area and in the country generally. Allied to this upward trend will be legal requirements for safe transportation, adequate and sanitary housing, rest stops, child care and education, crew-leader registration, and social security protection. The program of guided movement may also be expected to function more effectively. The inevitable result will be a reduction in the movements of these people and greater utilization of a smaller labor force.

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# APPENDIX

## Comparative Data on Migratory Farmworkers in the Atlantic Coast and Midcontinent Movements

| Items compared | | Atlantic coast movement [1] | Midcontinent movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Size of movement | workers | 25,000–50,000 | 140,000–250,000. |
| Average size of migrant household | persons | 2.8 | 6.5. |
| Workers per household | workers | 1.9 | 3.0. |
| Nonworking migrants per household | persons | .7 | 2.8. |
| Major point of origin | | Southern Florida | Southern Texas. |
| Major place of birth | | Georgia | Southern Texas ¼ in Mexico. |
| Ethnic origin | | Negro | Spanish-American. |
| Percentage of workers who started migrating after 1949 | percent | 76 | 37. |
| Percentage of workers who did nonfarm work during last 12 months. | | 15 | 22. |
| Total number of States worked in | number | 12 | 34. |
| Major States of employment | | Fla., N.Y., Va., N.C., Md. | Tex., Mich., Wis., Minn., Colo., Ohio, Idaho. |
| Major crops worked in | | Beans, potatoes | Cotton, sugar beets, vegetables. |
| Percentage of workers who were members of crews | percent | 67 | 39. |
| Percentage who migrate to— | | | |
| 1 State and return | do | 50 | 33. |
| 2 States and return | do | 35 | 24. |
| Educational level: | | | |
| All workers 0–4 grades | do | 43 | 61. |
| All workers 5–8 grades | do | 46 | 34. |
| All workers 9 grades and over | do | 11 | 5. |
| Household heads 0–4 grades | do | 60 | 81. |
| Household heads 5–8 grades | do | 31 | 18. |
| Household heads 9 grades and over | do | 9 | 1. |
| Average days worked (12 months): | | | |
| All workers | days | 182 | 131. |
| Male heads of households | do | 214 | 174. |
| Wives | do | 169 | 89. |
| Children: | | | |
| School | do | 84 | 83. |
| Nonschool | do | 158 | 140. |
| Days lost when available for work: | | | |
| All workers | do | 48 | 70. |
| Male heads of households | do | 44 | 89. |
| Wives | do | 55 | 34. |
| Children: | | | |
| School | do | 18 | 30. |
| Nonschool | do | 44 | 95. |
| Earnings per day worked: | | | |
| All workers | dollars | 4.99 | 5.95. |
| Male heads | do | 5.46 | 6.58. |
| Wives | do | 4.54 | 5.93. |
| School youth | do | 3.44 | 4.90. |
| Earnings for 12 months: | | | |
| All workers | do | 908.00 | 779.00. |
| Male heads | do | 1,169.00 | 1,145.00. |
| Wives | do | 768.00 | 528.00. |
| School youth | do | 289.00 | 404.00. |
| Per family | do | 1,733.00 | 2,208.00. |
| Year survey made | | 1953 | 1957. |

[1] Data from Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream (*15*).

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1960